FROM COAL PITS TO TAR SANDS:

EXAMINING LABOUR MIGRATION BETWEEN THE ATHABASCA OIL SANDS AND AN ATLANTIC CANADIAN REGION

NELSON FERGUSON

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

YORK UNIVERSITY

TORONTO, ONTARIO

September 2013

Abstract

In less than two decades, the Oil Sands industries of Northern Alberta have transformed from a costly experiment in oil production hidden in the Canadian hinterlands to a mega-industry employing over 100 000 individuals situated at the centre of the Canadian economy. This rapid growth is due in large part to industries' adoption of certain neoliberal strategies, in particular making use of mobile and flexible temporary migrant workforces drawn from communities from across Canada undergoing processes of deindustrialization, capital flight and high levels of unemployment. One such region is Industrial Cape Breton, a former centre of coal mining and steel milling. The region has become strongly connected to the Oil Sands industries following the demise of its central industries at the turn of the millennium and is now dealing with the impacts that patterns of long-distance labour migration have on local communities and families.

Based on multi-sited fieldwork conducted in Industrial Cape Breton and the Oil Sands region, the present dissertation examines this emerging pattern of labour migration as an aspect of the ongoing neoliberalization of the labour force. Through an examination of the political economies of migration and resource extraction, an exploration of the sending and receiving regions involved in these commutes, and use of work-life narratives as a methodological tool to examine the lived experiences of those involved in these mobile labour arrangements, this dissertation argues for attention to the connection of class and migration. Such labour migrations are both cause and consequence of a shift in classed subjectivities among a mobile working class involved in long-distance

commute work. The processes that allow for labour migration fall fundamentally within the scopes of a broader neoliberal project yet rest on the foundations formed through the pre-established Fordist project. The promises of Fordism and the Fordist legacy allow for the establishment and continuation of certain forms of neoliberalism and of certain forms of labour migration as workers attempting to re-create Fordist patterns of stable and secure relations to work instead become implicated in insecure and unstable work relations which highlight the neoliberal era.

Acknowledgements

It is something of a cliché to say that I couldn't have done this alone, but it is very true that I owe a great deal of gratitude to a great deal of people that have made this journey possible.

First and foremost, I thank my family: Lucie, William, and Violette. Lucie supported me throughout this entire process and helped keep me grounded at times when the project seemed insurmountable. William, who spent his first year of life in the field of Industrial Cape Breton, always reminded me that no matter how busy I am, there is always five minutes to play. And Violette, who joined our family just in time to see me spend a few late nights on the dissertation, for reminding me of the need for balance. Jacques and Louise offered moral support through this process, even if Jacques almost lost himself on Kelly's Mountain in the process.

I express my gratitude to my committee members, Teresa Holmes and Carlota McAllister, for their guidance throughout this process and for the interesting conversations that ensued. I particularly want to thank Albert Schrauwers. Albert has the wonderful talent for pushing one in productive directions while allowing one to find their own way and learn from their own mistakes. Over the past six years, Albert has gone above and beyond what I could have expected from a supervisor, and I consider myself fortunate indeed to have been his student.

I thank the members of the Write Stuff dissertation writing group, especially Alicia Grimes and Rhiannon Mosher. Those days of writing and talking shop on Salem

and in the Rustic Owl countered the often isolating nature of the writing process and kept me sane. And Aruna Panday, for listening to me ramble about dissertation planning and helping me to eat Albert's chocolates during our weekly drop-ins.

Finally, I express my deepest gratitude to the people that made this project possible: the individuals living mobile lives between Industrial Cape Breton and Fort MacMurray whose stories I share in these pages. The act of fieldwork is made possible through the kindness of strangers who open up their lives and share their stories with ethnographers such as ourselves. I am forever indebted and inspired by the courage and resilience you have shown me.

Table of Contents

Prologue

"Kiss-Kiss to your Wife, Kiss-Kiss to Your Kids": Narrating a Mobile Work-Life in a Neoliberalizing Era

This current dissertation examines an emerging circuit of interprovincial migration between the Oil Sands of Northern Alberta and a deindustrialized region of Atlantic Canada. In little more than fifteen years, the Oil Sands have gone from a little-known resource extraction experiment to a central component of the Canadian economy with its rapid expansion and development made possible due to large pools of labourers willing to engage in mobile work arrangements to provide temporary and flexible labour to this mega-industry. On the other side of the equation, the region of Industrial Cape Breton, after prolonged conditions of deindustrialization and capital flight, now finds itself serving as a pool of flexible reserve labour for distant labour processes.

Themes of migration, neoliberalism and classed subjectivities are engaged to explore these situations and to outline what I argue is the incomplete transition from Fordism to neoliberalism. In the pages to follow, I argue that the acceptance of such mobile livelihoods found in engaging in labour migration entails an acceptance of certain neoliberalized logics. Such acceptance, for workers and the families of such workers, is in part motivated by nostalgia of past Fordist working relations.

Yet, this prologue is not intended to provide an explanation or an overview of my theoretical, methodological or ethnographic themes that I will explore in the pages of this

dissertation. For such a discussion, I invite you to turn to the following Introduction chapter.

Rather, this prologue allows one of my central informants to, in an extended quotation, explain in his own words his lived experiences working in the Oil Sands and what he views as central issues of this pattern of work and migration in far more visceral and evocative terms than I could hope to convey.

One enduring challenge I have faced in writing this dissertation has been my efforts to strike a balance between ethnographic description and theoretical rigor. A central concern I hold is to ensure that the voices of those at the centre of fieldwork, those whose experiences motivate and inspire this present work, do not become obscured by my own application of theory, analysis and interpretations of the ethnography at hand and its links to broader global and historical processes. One way I have attempted to reconcile these ends is through what I term the work-life narrative, a methodological tool I employed in my fieldwork which was inspired by approaches using narrative style research methods (Jourdan 1997; Rapport and Overing 2000) such as the life-story (Linde 1993; Peacock and Holland 1993) and the life-history (Blackman 1991; Crapanzano 1984). A key method I employed throughout the fieldwork process entailed interviewing informants with the underlying goal of creating a chronological narrative of their working experiences through life. Through such narrations, I aimed to collect their impressions of how their work-lives have structured or had influence upon their lives along with their articulations of how broader social forces had similarly come to impact upon their work-lives and lives in general by extension. In presenting the textualizations of such narratives

and my analysis of such, I strive to balance the larger historical, economic and global structures which shape the circumstances of subjects' lives with their own interpretations while taking into account individuals' own capacity to retain a degree of control in their lives and to at least partially recognise, reinterpret and navigate through the structures in which and through which they live. In this regard, I am guided by Ong's call to attend to "both the ways in which lives are structured by large political and economic happenings and the ways in which people enact politics in their workplaces and neighbourhoods and practice economics in daily living" (1999:5).

As such, three chapters of this dissertation each focus in turn on the experiences of a specific household or individual, involved or impacted by commute work to the Oil Sands in some way and discuss the ways in which experiences of the individual or household at hand connect with larger historical, political, economic and social circumstances. On the one hand, I found the experiences of these individuals to be quite representative of the experiences of the many others I spoke with over the course of my fieldwork. The challenges, impacts and rationales for their participation in such mobile work organizations and their histories of work and connections to conceptions of home were shared with many others involved in the commute. On the other hand, the selected individuals, in their varied and idiosyncratic experiences, represent the diversity of experiences to be found in this organization of mobile labour: the stories of a young labourer beginning a career of mobile work, a kitchen attendant approaching retirement and a family of four habituated to mobile work trajectories underscore the complexity of

experiences to be found in the emerging connections between Industrial Cape Breton and the Oil Sands.

Yet, a particularly important aspect of life-narrative approaches is to underscore that one's life-story is never complete yet constantly shifting and being renegotiated. Such approaches then attempt to capture how the perspectives and descriptions of the events of one's past are constantly in flux with the individual meanings attributed to particular events dramatically shifting as life events and time give subjects new perspectives and vantage points from which to tell their life stories (Rapport and Overing 2000). Jourdan (1997), for instance, made use of the life-story approach with her key informant, Resina, over the course of multiple years, being able to foster a deep relationship between researcher and informant while having the opportunities to have her informant listen to and reflect on her own narrations and interpretations of the past. Such approaches underline that changing perspectives, differing opinions and multiple viewpoints exist within the same individual while also highlighting that such life-stories do not originate from the informant uniquely but are rather the results of social interactions between researcher and informant. Meanwhile, as can be argued with all ethnographic writing (Clifford and Marcus 1986), the researcher, through the acts of engaging with the informants and consciously or unconsciously guiding conversations towards topics of interest, along with the eventual acts of selection and editing through the writing process, fundamentally shapes what comes to be presented and silenced in the resulting text.

In the presentation of these work-life narratives, I have brought particular themes to the forefront and have focused on aspects of the work-life narratives which allows for in-depth exploration of such themes while tying the experiences of my informants to the surrounding larger-scale circumstances and comparable/contrasting experiences of other informants. As such, in presenting these work-life narratives, an underlying goal is to insist that large-scale, macro processes are not divorced from the experiences of the individual subjects. Human life remains a site of active negotiation, "that no matter what constituting power we assign the impersonal forces of history, language and upbringing, the subject always figures, at the very least as the site where these forces find expression and are played out" (Jackson 1996: 22). As Wolf attests:

> [W]e have asserted that what is worth studying is human experience; not economic experience, not psychological experience, not religious experience, cut into segments and studied separately but human experience understood as the experience of life. This I believe to be an assertion of freedom against slavery. For each segmentary model of man is also a straightjacket for men. (Wolf 1974: 96)

Yet, one person whom I met during the beginning of my fieldwork, despite being extremely generous in sharing his experiences and sentiments, gracious with his time and patient with my questions about what he saw as a foolish project for a young man such as myself to be involved in, is conspicuously absent in the work-life narratives of this present dissertation. Unfortunately, despite numerous engaging discussions at the beginning of my fieldwork, Angus was called away for work once more only a few weeks after I arrived in the field and I was not able to engage with him and explore his stories to the extent that I would be able to include him in a work-life narrative chapter.

Yet, despite the short time that I had to get to know Angus, his frank words and his keen sense of observation have coloured many of my own thoughts on the long-distance commute and his influence is felt throughout this present dissertation. As such, I have included below an excerpt from one conversation with Angus (or, more appropriately, a monologue Angus delivered for my benefit) during my first month of fieldwork, when I knew little of the dynamics of migration and the challenges that such mobile workers faced. Angus was extremely articulate and loquacious, with a stream-of-consciousness style of speech in which he would simultaneously maintain several lines of conversation with anecdotes looping back onto one another.

Over several evenings, sitting in his small apartment and sipping beer, Angus would respond to my general questions about working in the Oil Sands with elaborate anecdotes of personal experience. In the following passage, in response to a question about his own experiences working in the Oil Sands, Angus began a thirty-minute discourse on his various and layered experiences, beginning with his family's decision to move to Red Deer, Alberta from their home in Cape Breton so that he could find work as a carpenter, to his decision to embark on a back-and-forth work schedule between the Oil Sands and his adoptive Albertan home, working in the North while his wife continued to work in Red Deer as an administrative assistant for an oil firm. As he continues, he explains not only the repetition and routine found in a typical week of work and home life when he began mobile work in the Oil Sands in the mid-1990s but also the reasons leading to his eventual divorce, his contemplations of suicide and decision to give up working in the oil sands and return to Nova Scotia after over a decade "out West". Below

is an excerpt of his narration, taken verbatim with the only interruptions being his occasional pause to take a sip of beer. As but one of many stories of a life lived between a home and away in a neoliberalizing era where workers are increasingly conditioned to accept less from their relations to work, I offer it without further comment, interpretation, analysis or discussion on my part and will let Angus's words tell his story.

A week in the Oil Sands, in his own words

> So what had happened was that Syncrude came up and they said, alright, we're going to do this project and we're going to do it at four-tens[1]. Fort MacMurray, they were busing in at that point, so the nearest town is Edmonton which is five and a half hours away by bus. Ok? So, I was, it's a one lane highway, so in-out, there's no other way to go. I live in Red Deer which is another hour and a half. So I'm six hours away.
>
> So, four-tens. Sunday, ok. Sunday at 3 o'clock is when the buses leave. So they leave and people live in Calgary, so that means this guy here behind me had been in that bus, people live in Grand Prairie, Lethbridge, are going eight or nine hours.
>
> So this is what I do: Sunday morning, so I'll give you the four-ten scenario. Sunday at 3 o'clock, that's when they pick us up at Red Deer. Some people are picked up at 1:30, some people have been picked up at noon. So, 1:30 in the parking lot of a big hotel, it would be, five hundred, no I don't want to exaggerate, it'd be four hundred people waiting for buses to get to Fort McMurray.
>
> So, kiss-kiss to your wife, kiss-kiss to your kids. At three o'clock, ok? You take your duffle bag, you throw that in—and we're not talking about high-coach here—we're re talking like Greyhound, Acadian Lines, worse shape than that. And you get in there and you're just praying that the VCR works, 'cause that's all you got.
>
> So the driver goes, "Sorry boys, the VCR's not working, no movies today". So now you sit your sorry ass in a bus, going up North. So you're sitting there for six hours. At the four hour mark, there's a little hick town, there's one gas station. And I used to smoke, I smoked for years. So you get out and after four hours of travelling, I get my ass out there and I try to haul back two dories[2] as fast as I can so I can get my ass back in the bus.

---

[1] Four-tens are a type of work arrangement consisting of four days of work, ten hours per day.
[2] A somewhat uncommon slang for cigarettes.

Now you've got your last long stretch there, then you're at the camp. The camps are, you got Mildew Lake[3] and that's like the Cadillac, cause you're right on site, you don't have any buses to take the next day cause you can walk to work or you're like at Borealis and the other one I don't remember the name. And these are all like Atco trailers.

Ya see, they build camps all around the big plants, to feed all the people in, 'cause they can't put all the people in at the main base. But Mildred Lake is the one that feeds Syncrude and that's the one that's primo. Not cause of the camp itself but because it's on site. You don't have to take another bus. The other camp, you get in there, it's all Atco trailers, side-by-side.

And what happens, then, we're creatures of habit. Like, you wake up basically at a certain time. So, now, there's the bunk houses that lodge fifty people. So now you got the centre core, you got two washing machines, the other side you got five or six urinals and four stalls. So that's on that side. This side here, you got showers on that one side, so basically you got ten showers let's say.

So you and I wake up at 6 o'clock, let's say. So every morning, I would wake up with this certain individual, I'd open my door and see him every day, I don't work with him, I don't know him personally. We sit there and we urinate together and then we brush our teeth in the sink next to each other and then you'd take your towel, take one shower in the morning and one in the evening, I'd go back to my room and it was the same routine. And it was the same routine. I'd get my same, my same food, right, bag my own lunch.

There's some really good food. You can take bread and you can grab cold cuts and lettuce and tomato but you're too lazy, so you take the premade stuff.

So now, it's 9 o'clock, you just got off a bus after six and a half hours. You're in the camp. Your room is only basically a seven by eight *[feet]* cell, you only got a single bed and you got to bring your own TV. Now they're supplying TV's but back then you got to bring your own TV. I'd bring a beer fridge.

And then you sit there.

But you're hyper. I'd be right hyper, 'cause six hours on the bus, man, that's a long haul. I can't sleep, like holy shit. So I'd sit there and pound back the beer. And it'd be midnight by the time I pass out.

Then wake up at six, do your shit.

---

[3] "Mildew Lake" is a common nickname for one of the larger work-camps, Mildred Lake.

Now. It's 6:20 on Thursday. You run as fast as you can outta camp, 'cause your bus leaves at ten after seven. So now you try to get a meal in, 'cause you got six and a half hours on the bus again. So you try to grab a meal as fast as you can, try to shower, you finish work, blah, blah, blah, blah.

And now there's like, a million people and like a million buses. Like, at peak construction, there was ten thousand people at our site alone. Now the buses leave, man.

All you see is the line of red lights. Insane, you'd have to see it. And now, the small little hick town, you come back through, you pound another one. But now, when I get into Red Deer, it's Friday morning.

So Friday morning, it's 1:30 in the morning. So, you're screwed. You gotta pick up a cab. And they think you're a millionaire 'cause you just left Syncrude. So the cabbie's like, "It's a fixed rate buddy, it's outside the town". So it's like 20 bucks to get home.

So I basically worked forty hours at a mill and I would make thirty bucks an hour. I'm not denying it but I'd clear about nine hundred dollars, the money was that good. But I'm putting in six hours on the bus, one way, six hours on the backside, putting another twelve hours in. And now I've got fifty-two hours in.

So now, you talk about, well, how did your marriage fail?

So now it's Friday, one o'clock in the morning, eh. I've been in a camp setting.

So if you've ever been in a camp setting, you gotta be careful that nobody steals your crap, 'cause you got your backpack, your wallet's in there, everything's in your back pack. Your whole life's in there. But you're going to go for a meal, 'cause they wouldn't allow bags inside the lunch room. So you're like, "Ah shit, I hope nobody steals my crap, blah, blah, blah".

Plus, I'm not the type of guy that wants to get stepped on. It's the same as you, eh? You show any weaknesses, they'll pick on you for the rest of your life. So you're sitting there, you're eating with like five thousand people, like, us at the camp was two thousand men.

So you're sitting there eating and you don't know anybody, you're basically eating alone with two thousand people. Somebody reaches over to grab the salt. You say, "Listen buddy, don't put your hand over my food man, 'cause I'll break your arm, right? If you want something, just ask for it and I'll hand it to you". No worries, right? It's like a gang mentality, right? If you're small, you're gonna get picked on and no one wants to get picked on, right? But it's the institutional, mental, you gotta keep in the zone, right?

So in my case, it's Friday, I've lived with two thousand men in the camp. I worked with ten thousand people. I'm frustrated. Like, my level of, I'm about ready to snap, right. So now, you're sitting there, it's Friday. I've got two kids, I've got a wife. She goes to work at, whatever, eight o'clock in the morning. I got home at 1:30. I just got home, I can't go, "Well, it's 1:30, I'm going straight to bed!" So I'd be sitting on the couch, man, just trying to decompress a bit, right?

So now, it's Friday, alright, 1:30 in the morning, go to bed at three. Everybody goes to school or whatever, life goes on, right? But you're alone now, right? You wake up at nine o'clock, alright, what are you going to do? There's nobody there, 'cause everybody's gone to work or school, so you say, shit, I'm goin' to call my buddy that I work with. So what are you going do? So you call, "Hey Cal, what are you up to?"

Cal's single 'cause his wife left him the year before mine did. So it's like, it's great, you got your single buddy that you've been with all week. So it's like, "I don't know, do you wanna go and grab a breakfast?" "Sure, whatever, I'll meet you wherever". 'Cause you got money, it's not 'cause you're broke. So then you go out and you get breakfast with him.

Now what are you going to do? It's not like ya got hobbies, you're gone four days of the week, so ya say, "Wanna go shoot a game of pool?" Sure, so we go there, we go to Patties. So now you're, by the time it's three o'clock in the afternoon, you're half-baked now cause you been drinkin' since eleven o'clock in the morning, right? 'Cause you're entitled 'cause you worked hard and you know, life is bad and everything's a shit sandwich, right?

So now all of a sudden, you come home, it's like seven o'clock and you're like, "Alright man, whadda we do?" And everyone's lookin' at you, going like, "Whadda ya mean, what do you want?" You know what I mean? "We do this, we do that, we got swimming lessons, we got this, we got that."

So you're left out of the equation. Right? 'Cause you're only there every other week. At that point, it was every weekend, right. So now you're going to play discipline or whatever?

So now, then, Saturday is Disneyland time, 'cause you feel bad for being away, you've been gone all week, so whatever you want, just let me know. Toys R Us, whatever you want, just let me know, Daddy's on it, right? So now, your wife is trying to discipline the kids during the week, you let 'em do whatever the hell they want to cause it's Christmas, every Saturday is Christmas, that's your time with them.

Now that's done, Saturday night's over. Sunday, you wake up at eight o'clock in the morning. You go, oh, sorry the language "Fuck! I gotta leave on the bus at 3 o'clock".

So now, you gotta get your game plan on. You gotta get fuckin' ready cause you're going back to the institute, right? Go back to jail at three o'clock. Three o'clock is jail time, right? Now your mind-set goes, "Hold up, leave me alone, man, I'm not in the mood. You wanna do something, well I can't do anything 'cause at 3 o'clock, I gotta be on that bus. So I'd like a little "me" time". So everybody's like, holy fuck, he was so nice yesterday, why is he such an ass today right? So then it's the whole mind-set, you gotta get your game on.

So now, back to work. So then your routine goes on and then, the whole time you're in that cell, you're wondering to yourself, "What did I do to deserve this?" Ya know, like, "What did I do to deserve all of this", right?

And, what brought me to the point where I'm not doing this shit anymore and I'll show you pay stubs, cause I'm not denying it, I'm not lying to you cause there's no point, I made good money, every year I was there. That's simple. One weekend, I was there and they say "Angus, do you mind staying the weekend?"

Yeah, no problem, the only problem is, Sunday, 'cause I know personally who I am, I'm not as tough as most. I was in the camp on a Sunday, 'cause we didn't work that Sunday cause something had happened and we didn't have the gear to do it, so we only had double time on Saturday, Sunday I'm off, Monday is regular shift.

And I'm in Mildred Lake, everybody's gone, there's only like I'd say ten of us in the camp and I woke up. And the only thing going through my mind is that I'm going to kill myself.

That's the only thing. Like, try to picture yourself, like, I'm not a suicidal kind of guy. I'm jovial, easy-going. The only thing going through my mind was "Today's my day, man, I can't take this shit anymore, I'm going to fuckin' off myself".

It's like you're on a treadmill, man and you can never get off.

Right? And, I didn't do it selflessly, I wanted to provide more for my family, I've always been that kind of person, right? And then you've realized, hey, you've lost your family, cause you're fuckin' nuts to have done what you've done. 'Cause you should have said, hey you should be happy with your means.

'Cause on the same street I lived on, there was a gentleman that worked at the local gas station. And for me, I always said, "What a fuckin' loser he is!" Right, cause he's working for what, ten, fifteen bucks an hour. The guy's a moron! But he coaches little league, he does whatever. And you're sitting there thinking, "Wait, how come I can't make it on five hundred dollars a week? I *have* to make a grand a week or else we lose everything". Like, it's fuckin' nuts! Like, how come we're at that point? But then you buy a lot of shit, like.

My take and one of the reasons why my marriage failed, is basically I, at the end, after working, 'cause your mind, you're not focused, I mean, even now, I still have issues with that, 'cause I worked my ass off, 'cause that's in my character, that's who I am. But then you become the ATM, 'cause that's what's expected of you.

But you get so caught up. You feel so guilty. Yeah, the guilt is insane, man.

'Cause I'm saying too, kids that stay at home, you want to buy them the little remote control car to drive around, you wanna get them swimming lessons. You wanna get them whatever. And if they look back and say, "We don't need those things, we needed Dad home or we wanted a family." Well....

At this point Angus finished his beer. Without a further word, he got up off the couch to get him and me another from the nearby fridge. In silence, he twisted the cap off his bottle, took a long drink and then began to tell me about the time when his friend Cal's daughter moved to Fort McMurray...

Chapter One

Introduction: Shovels at the Ready and the Shape of Things to Come

And you can say what you want about it but it's keeping Cape Breton alive. The biggest employer in Cape Breton is Fort McMurray. Without it, put it this way, we couldn't live here.

- John[4], a general labourer recently returned from his third sojourn in the Oil Sands region.

Well, Nelson, you're talking about three choices. Either the whole family moves out West. Which a lot of 'em don't want. Or stay home while Daddy goes to work and comes back home. Or you all stay here and go on welfare. That's your choices. Jobs are very, very rare here.

- Freddy, an electrician who has travelled back and forth to the Oil Sands for the past seven years.

[4] In order to protect the confidentiality of those involved in this research project, pseudonyms have been used for informants and interviewees unless otherwise noted.

On a rainy early spring evening with a chill wind spilling in from the Atlantic Ocean, over two hundred people gathered in the port of Sydney in the centre of Industrial Cape Breton, raising their shovels in unison to protest the region's chronic economic decline, joblessness, out-migration and growing imperative for themselves, their siblings and their children to go "out West" to find work. Together, they made the statement that they are "shovel-ready" and willing to work but that the impacts of distant political decisions and relations of capital have allowed the region to deteriorate to the point where the largest employer of the local population is located five thousand kilometres to the west, in the distant industries of the Northern Albertan Athabasca Oil Sands.

It has been over a decade since the last of the coal mines and the steel mill of Industrial Cape Breton, in eastern Nova Scotia, closed. While the region's sustained economic decline has historical roots dating to the immediate post-World World II era (Morgan 2009; Gibbs and Leech 2009), the closing of the last major industries and region's economic *raison d'être* have had substantial impacts on the local communities' self-definition and individuals' conceptions of self which goes beyond the immediate results of rampant unemployment. These closures served to underscore the fading of stable, secure, unionized Fordist-style work held by miners and millworkers into the past and the increasing acceptance of neoliberalized contingent and temporary work, either in the local call-centre industries or in the Oil Sands out West. Individuals struggle to determine what these new relations of work entail as members of formally stalwart working-class communities defined by collective worker struggle find themselves

increasingly enmeshed in processes of work that are increasingly fragmented, precarious and individuated.

The roots of this protest emerged from a series of events that became a focal point within Industrial Cape Breton about the connected issues of local economic decline, unemployment, deindustrialization and the increasing amount of labour migration to Northern Alberta.

Beginning in the 1960s, when economic decline was first defined as a political issue in the region (Donald 1966), multiple attempts have been made at the local, provincial and national level to secure new sources of employment (Barber 1990; Morgan 2009). During my period of fieldwork in 2009/2010, the most recent attempt at local economic development took form in a local initiative to capitalize on Industrial Cape Breton's deep Sydney Harbor. Several local business leaders identified that the harbour was deep and wide enough to accommodate transatlantic container ships. Private capital, they argued, could be attracted to build a major international shipping port in the area, providing hundreds if not thousands of jobs for the region in the process. The only obstacle identified was that the mouth of the harbour was several metres too shallow to allow such ships entry into the port. These leaders rationalized that if the public accepted the financial costs of removing part of the seabed through a harbour-dredging project, private capital would quickly step in to construct this major port initiative and they thus spearheaded a project to have municipal, provincial and federal governments collaborate to fund the dredging project.

Despite lacking key elements in this plan of action with no private investors stating interest in constructing port facilities and with the eastern seaboard already well-served by major container shipping ports in nearby Halifax as well as in New York, the plan regardless gained traction among the local public and local governance structures. A multinational dredging contractor placed a successful bid for the project, while the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM)[5] strongly championed the idea that the three levels of government would fund the project in order to bring employment and prosperity back to the region.

Most of those I spoke with throughout Industrial Cape Breton had strong doubts about the project's probability for success. Most underlined how the dredging project was at best a rather tenuous proposal with indirect connections to creating employment in the region, at worst a dire waste of resources and time. Yet, despite widespread doubts and the unlikelihood of the project's ability to redefine the region as a major shipping hub, the notion of bringing back some form of stable and secure industrial-style employment became an increasingly powerful and poignant idea and, to use the word most bandied about by community leaders, politicians and the public themselves, served to bring *hope* into the region. The CBRM pledged a small percentage of the funds needed for the dredging while making appeals to provincial and federal governments for the remainder of the project costs.

While provincial and national politicians largely ignored CBRM requests to discuss funding options, within Industrial Cape Breton the project gained momentum in

[5] The governance structure which represents the towns, villages and hamlets surrounding Sydney Harbour which are colloquially and collectively referred to as Industrial Cape Breton.

public discourse as the path to solve the region's economic woes and persistent out-migration. An outpouring of local support was evident in daily letters and editorial submissions published in the local paper. One influential local community leader's published letter eloquently reflected the views held by many in the region:

> To say yes [*to the harbour dredging project*] is to provide the community with an economic ramp that will draw us away from the old story of hardship, uncertainty and dependency...In the old story we are seen as a marginalized people hanging on to a rock located at the edge of the North Atlantic. In the new narrative we can be a prosperous people living on an island that happens to be dead centre in the middle of the whole wide world. It is imperative that the harbour be dredged. (Cape Breton Post, May 5 2010)

In my conversations with local community members in the local Tim Horton's, at town hall meetings and while walking about the community, individuals regularly underlined how, for them, this project was not simply a matter of creating a handful of potential jobs but rather restoring a certain sense of order and stability to the region. As one commented, he hoped that the incoming port project would mean that his sons wouldn't have to go out West for temporary and intermittent work contracts and that they could instead work full-time "at home" instead.

In response to the Federal government's refusal to discuss project funding, CBRM set a deadline for a response to their funding request, publicly underlining that it would be the Federal government's decision to fund this project (or not) thatwould decide whether or not Industrial Cape Breton's connected problems of out-migration, unemployment and decline would be solved. As the deadline approached and the Federal government continued to remain mute and disinterested in the region's plans, public

appeals became ever more impassioned. The following letter published in the local newspaper, co-written by the graduating class of the local high school, speaks directly to how the proposed project went beyond being a simple harbour-improvement plan and came to represent the wider concerns held by a community struggling to define itself in a time of uncertainty where mobile work relations and outmigration have become an undesired norm:

> Our future is dependent on the next few days as the deadline for a decision on harbour dredging rapidly approaches...We are now convinced that if the dredging approval does not happen by May 14, we may as well pack our bags and leave after graduation in June...If this is not the investment opportunity that is part of the plan to secure our future, we are not clear what is in store for us down the road at home... We are not looking for someone to hand us prosperity on a platter. This is our home...We are the future. We want the opportunity to stay home. (Cape Breton Post May 10 2010)

Such sentiments of uncertainty are not necessarily novel in Industrial Cape Breton, yet they do take on a different character in a contemporary neoliberal period. Industrial Cape Breton has long been marked by persistent economic decline while forms of unemployment and contingent labour have long existed side-by-side with the presence of industrialized, unionized, blue-collar labour. Unionized miners enjoy pay, benefits and security in stark contrast to those employed tenuously in fish factories, the service sector and as general labourers (Haivan 2009; Gibbs and Leech 2009; Barber 1990). Yet despite a divided social-structure between those employed directly within Fordist work organizations and those relegated to jobs with lesser benefits and protections, such conditions did serve to introduce and reinforce, at the very least, the concepts of

contemporary labour relations and the ideas of unionization, collective bargaining, stability and fair remuneration. This scenario created what I term the blue-collar ideal: the Fordist organization of work created within Industrial Cape Breton is a widely held conception of what forms work could and should take, even for those excluded from such relations.

The loss of such employment entailed not just the loss of employment for the relatively small proportion of miners and millworkers but also a loss of "normative orientation" (Dagenais 2008) for the entire community. Deindustrialization, along with the concomitant rise of mobile and temporary work arrangements in the Oil Sands and a low-paid local service industry as the only alternatives, signalled that a Fordist past seemed to be giving way to a neoliberal present in which individuals have to be prepared to expect [and accept] much less from their relation to work than they once did.

Leading up to the CBRM's imposed deadline given to the Federal government to provide support for the project, the community organized a mass rally. Originally formed to show support for the harbor dredging project, the rally took on much broader meanings for those in attendance, who collectively and publically underlined their anger and frustrations towards the impacts of deindustrialization on their communities and how the concomitant issues of out-migration, unemployment and economic decline had altered their way of life. They brought their shovels, a powerful symbol of the shovels of past coal miners, to show that, despite the various processes that have taken work from the area, they as a community of working men and women within a region they continued to

proudly refer to as *Industrial* Cape Breton, were ready to work, even if those who once used their labour had abandoned the region.

Despite the rain, hundreds showed up to the rally, shovels and signs in hand to protest uncertain times. Multiple speeches were made by community leaders and local politicians about the importance of the rally for the region's future. Finally, the Men of the Deeps, a popular local choir of former coal miners, sang of the glories and hardships of Cape Breton's industrial past. One mother I spoke with explained to me how she wished her husband could have attended at the rally but was out West until the end of the month working as a general labourer. Her young son, I noticed, had his own plastic toy-shovel with a piece of cardboard attached to the handle reading "This is my future".

From Coal Pits to Tar Sands

Some twenty years ago, in his study of mill workers in a Northern Ontario town, Dunk summarized the classed experience of industrial workers as essentially "knowing that one's entire life is going to be spent in a job which is not intrinsically interesting or rewarding" (1991:42). Yet such stability and knowledge of what the future holds is no longer commonplace. Experiences of capital flight, unemployment, deindustrialization and accompanying regional economic decline have made everyday life an experience of "ruptures" for many (Sider 2006:257). Processes of capital produce "redundant workers" (Sider 2006:251) as such workers come to absorb "the costs of capital" and "carry the burden of insecurity" themselves (Pupo and Thomas 2009:xv) while the keyword of "flexibility" comes to the forefront (Martin 1994; Harvey 1990). In response to the demands of realizing livelihoods in a contemporary neoliberal era, lives come to resemble

"train stations" rather than "villages" as migration comes to be "the icon of the global age" (Sennett 2006: 2). Experiences of work and class have shifted greatly in a neoliberal period, highlighted by requirements of adaptation, mobility and flexibility. Dunk's underlying assumptions linked to the stability and security found in a brief era of Fordist-style industrial work no longer hold.

With these opening directions in mind, this dissertation is concerned with examining the contemporary changes to work-lives in the Canadian context and what these changes entail for experiences and functions of class in an era of neoliberal capitalism. This is achieved through an ethnographic analysis of an emerging circuit of interprovincial labour migration between the Athabasca Tar Sands/Oil Sands[6] region of Northern Alberta and a deindustrialized region of Industrial Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, in eastern Atlantic Canada. Over the past several decades, the industries of the Oil Sands have transformed from a small yet costly experiment in oil production in the Northern Boreal forest to a mega-industry employing over a hundred thousand workers situated at the centre of the Canadian economy (Chastko 2004). Rapid periods of development and

[6] The tar sands / oil sands constitute a mixture of sand, clay, earth and bitumen—the latter a tar-like form of petroleum which, once extracted from the sands, must be further processed to produce synthetic crude oil. As such, the sands are neither properly "tar sands" nor "oil sands" but rather bituminous sands. The sands were originally referred to as tar sands due to bitumen's resemblance to tar (and is, in fact, also commonly used throughout the world as a paving material) but the term "oil sands" came into use once the possibility of using the bitumen as a source of synthetic crude oil came into being. While for most of the twentieth century, the terms "oil sands" and "tar sands" were used relatively interchangeably (LeRiche 2006; Pratt 1976), the terms have become politically loaded over the course of the past decade with environmental groups favouring the latter term and government and industry the former as more "business-friendly" (Nikiforuk 2008). In my own work, I continue to use the terms tar sands/Tar Sands and oil sands/Oil Sands interchangeably yet among my informants (principally mobile workers in the oil and gas industry), "Oil Sands" is the colloquially used term (possibly due to their strong connection to this industry through employment) and I have predominantly reflected that usage throughout the dissertation. In addition, "oil sands" refers to the actual physical material of bituminous deposits while the capitalized "Oil Sands" or Athabasca Oil Sands is used to designate the region of Northern Alberta in which these deposits are located.

construction and expansion in this industry have been made possible due to large numbers of former industrial workers scattered across Canada (and to a lesser degree from beyond Canada), who, as the result of various processes of deindustrialisation in North America, find themselves un- and under employed. The Oil Sands industry has made use of these various labour pools, establishing routes of migration between the industry and various de-industrialized communities. These workers have been utilized as contingent and flexible sources of skilled labour to expand and maintain the industry to the extent that in 2010, over 30,000 workers in the Oil Sands were such temporary contingent workers, working in the Oil Sands while calling an elsewhere "home" (Ferguson 2011). Industrial Cape Breton is one such elsewhere, the name of which signifies its industrial past yet belies its post-industrial present. A former centre of coal mining and steel milling, the region came to be strongly connected to the Oil Sands following the demise of these two central industries in the late 1990s and early 2000s as unemployed industrial workers along with workers who were excluded from these Fordist labour processes began travelling back and forth to the Oil Sands in order to realize a livelihood and support their families "back home".

This dissertation is particularly concerned with examining the experiences of those involved in and impacted by these circular labour migrations between "home" and "away". A foundation of my argument (following Barber 2004; Barber and Lem 2008 and 2010) is that labour migration is a fundamentally classed phenomenon, a key intervention I will examine in more detail shortly. Former conceptions of class emerging through long-lasting, shared experiences on the proverbial and literal factory floor no

longer apply as they once did, as neoliberalized individuated and fragmented work experiences become increasingly commonplace (Ong 2006; Sider 2006; Smith 1999; Winson and Leach 2008). Yet as I will argue, class continues to be a salient concept and lived reality. The concepts of subjectivity and hegemony offer an avenue to explore the experiences and consequences of class in a neoliberal era where labour mobility is increasingly common and expected while labour migration comes to be seen as directly related to class, both motivated by and altering experiences and conditions of class. A central argument I develop is that labour migrants commuting between Industrial Cape Breton and the Oil Sands industries embark upon such mobile work trajectories to realize certain Fordist-era lives and identities no longer attainable at "home". Yet, in the process of their movements, such workers collude and consent in assuming neoliberalized classed subjectivities in which flexible, individualized and self-regulated relations to work are developed. Neoliberal and Fordist-derived classed subjectivities are not opposed; rather, the former comes to be superimposed upon the latter as the circumstances brought about through such mobile workers' migration instead come to re-create their own sense of self.

This introductory chapter outlines the major themes of this project, based on a year-long period of multi-sited fieldwork I conducted in Industrial Cape Breton and in the Oil Sands region of Northern Alberta. I outline this emerging pattern of labour migration between these regions and begin to identify the connections between Atlantic Canada and the Oil Sands. A major aim of this chapter is provide an overview of the development of my approaches towards this particular pattern of labour migration and an overview of the theoretical trajectory I undertook in examining this instance of labour mobility. The

theoretical issues I grapple with in the following pages emerged somewhat organically as a result of the particular time period in which I came to examine the long-distance commute: immediately following the 2008 global financial crisis while the precarity and contingent status of temporary workers in the Oil Sands industries became rapidly and painfully underlined. This ethnographic moment led me to approach an analysis of such mobile work trajectories through the languages of neoliberalism, classed subjectivities, hegemony and the political economy of labour migration.

Yet before I enter into the particularities of theory and the research questions of this dissertation, a brief description of the areas in which I conducted my fieldwork is in order. I spent eleven months living in a small community in Industrial Cape Breton and slightly over a month in the Oil Sands region, based in the town of Fort McMurray. For my informants—principally the mobile workers, family members of such workers and members of the communities within the sending region of Industrial Cape Breton—these two areas were defined respectively as "home" and "away". While a great portion of this dissertation is with the individual and household experiences of migration, the landscapes in which these movements take place play a substantial role in how such experiences come to be formed. Harvey's concept of "spaces of capital" (2001, 2010) has been central in articulating the processes by which capital comes to create and animate certain landscapes and is explored in more detail in a later section of this chapter. As an entry point to this discussion, the following section begins to detail the field-sites and points to how subtle (and not-so-subtle) ways in which certain "geographies of accumulation" (2001) came to be experienced in the field.

The Field Sites of "Home" and "Away"

In Industrial Cape Breton, I lived on the outskirts of the former coal mining town of Sydney Mines. I spent a fair portion of my time walking throughout town, strolling along the ocean's edge, dropping by the local coffee shop to see a familiar face and usually wandering to the centre of town, where the mine that provided the main source of employment was once located. The shafts have been sealed up and the former industrial site is in the process of slowly being "reclaimed", with the hazardous materials left over from nearly a century of resource extraction being removed, grass and trees planted where coal was once shunted over rail and a park built where a majority of the town's men once began their work-day. I would walk around the small streets circling the former mine, all lined with compact row-houses built in the days of the company houses and the company store. In the early winter evenings, the air would be thick and sweet with the smell of coal burning in basement furnaces – still the preferred means of heat for homes in the area. When the wind blew right, the unlit streets would be clouded with white smoke. In moments like these, I could have a glimmer of understanding for my neighbours' nostalgia for the time when miners would step out of their houses in the dark mornings and walk the few hundred meters to the shaft nearby, beginning their days of extracting the black rock from coal faces stretching outwards beneath the Atlantic ocean.

Yet, walking through the streets, it is impossible not to notice the marks of the present chafing alongside the signs of the past. A good number of these company houses

lie abandoned, no smoke issuing forth from their chimneys and plywood nailed over windows with doors boarded shut[7].

The scenes of Sydney Mines are replicated throughout the towns and villages of Industrial Cape Breton. On the eastern edge of Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, the region of Industrial Cape Breton hugs the Atlantic Ocean, situated around the small Atlantic Ocean inlet of Sydney Harbour. The region itself was created and populated through both geological happenstance and political necessity principally in the mid-to-late 1800s and early 1900s due to national and commercial interests in the region's deposits of sub-marine coal[8]. Shafts were dug into the earth and around each shaft the Company[9] built row-houses and company stores for incoming workers. Towns and villages came to form around these mines with such towns and villages often named for the mines themselves. Sydney Mines had several major mines over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth century and took its name for the harbor it bordered and the

---

[7] Abandoned houses are a common site throughout Industrial Cape Breton. A conversation with political scientist Tom Urbaniak (February 2010) from Cape Breton University revealed that an estimated seven hundred houses in Cape Breton Regional Municipality lie abandoned with unsure ownership in various states of deterioration. A depressed housing market and homes passed down from one generation to the next without the use of legally recognized deeds meant that during the economic declines of the late twentieth and early 21st century, many homeowners who out-migrated from the area found abandoning their homes an easier prospect than selling or maintaining ownership and continuing to pay (or risking the possibility of beginning to pay) property tax.

[8] The majority of the coal deposits in the eastern Cape Breton Island region extend under the floor of the Atlantic Ocean, making this form of sub-marine coal mining particularly treacherous, with miners not only worrying about the dangers typically associated with coal mining but also the possibility of flooding of the mine from the ocean overhead (Morgan 2009).

[9] In Industrial Cape Breton, the "Company" is shorthand for the shifting corporations, companies and owners who invested and de-invested in the region's central industries over the past century as detailed in Chapter Two.

industry that gave it its *raison d'etre*. In the early twentieth century when the first major commercial mines were opened, a steel mill was built in the geographical centre of Industrial Cape Breton in what would become the urban centre of Sydney, importing mined iron ore from Newfoundland and using local coal as thermal energy and as coking material to produce steel. While these towns and villages were geographically separated, they came to be connected by rail. Some rail-lines brought coal to the mill in Sydney while others led away from the region, hauling finished steel and coal to central Canada. Such relations allowed the young nation to achieve independence from British export and to gain the raw materials for the establishment of its manufacturing sector. Meanwhile, Industrial Cape Breton became a closely knit series of company towns and villages, a small but relatively densely populated area supported by industrial work on the eastern coast of the mainly rural, sparsely populated Cape Breton Island[10].

The mines and mill were in many ways the centre of community life, economically and socially and were also the nexus of labour struggles and labour successes over the twentieth century. By the immediate post-World War II period, worker struggles had successfully transformed industries which had been based on practices of exploitation and indentured labour into workplaces offering fair compensation and secure livelihoods (as will be explored in more detail in the following chapter). The widespread acceptance of the Fordist compact ushered in a time that many in Industrial Cape Breton

[10] Much of the history of Industrial Cape Breton and Cape Breton Island included in this dissertation is derived from various conversations with residents in the area and my own experiences of being a resident of Cape Breton Island (See Epilogue). The history of the region is explored in more detail in Chapter Two while Morgan 2009 as well as Gibbs and Leech 2009 offer excellent historical overviews of the region.

remember as one of relative prosperity and stability (*cf.* Gibbs and Leech 2009; Morgan 2009; Barber 1990).

The closing of the mines and steel mill in the late 1990s and early 2000s dealt a devastating blow to the region. While Industrial Cape Breton has a long history of economic difficulty and unemployment for those excluded from Fordist work relations, the impact of the closures of the main local industries continues to ripple outwards and shape social life, public debate and political discussion far beyond the physical vestiges of empty houses and boarded-up windows of those who have gone "away". Just as the mines were geographic centres of the towns and villages in which they were situated, their loss has been felt as not merely an upset to the local economy but also a social and normative loss to the community. A region that defined itself as an industrial centre, proudly taking on the name of Industrial Cape Breton as a series of "working man's towns" around a "steel city", has found itself devoid of industry with no work left to do[11].

During my walks about town, the Oil Sands became an expected and anticipated theme of conversation wherever I stopped. The clerk at the post-office, the waitress as the diner or the man smoking outside the corner-store all share stories of about how a

[11] The past decade has seen dramatic changes in the local economy in Industrial Cape Breton. Municipal and provincial governments have played a key role in attracting various call centre companies to invest in the area in order to provide alternative sources of employment to replace defunct coal mining, steel-milling and secondary industrial activities (Gibbs and Leach 2009). As an example of this sense of loss, the Northside Industrial Park was originally constructed to house and attract various manufacturing and industrial businesses. During the first month of my fieldwork, the last industrial business in the park, an automotive parts manufacturing, closed and the Northside Industrial Park found itself devoid of industry. The only business still open in the industrial park during fieldwork was a call centre operating out of a former warehouse, a detail which for many painfully underlined the shift of the region's economic base from industry and manufacturing to the service sector.

brother, a father or a son are getting ready to go back "out West" or are coming home any day. A teacher explains to me her concerns that some of her students are lagging behind. They have fathers working out West and the back-and-forth work arrangements, she surmises, seem to create instability in family life that leads to poor performance in the classroom. A homeowner laments that she can't find an electrician or plumber for repairs on her aging house anymore: "They're all out West," she exclaims. Two brothers, both welders between contracts, talk to me at the diner and explain to me how Northside[12] would be in much more dire straits if not for their ability to go away to secure a living and spend their wages "back home". In the parking lot of the coffee shop, aging rusted cars park next to shiny new pick-up trucks with Alberta license plates while inside, men trade stories about which companies are best to work for out West and complain about the tiny rooms or poor meals in their last work-camp. While the region has a long history of people "going down the road"[13] for work, the current "commutes" to the Oil Sands leave tangible and patent marks on the social life of the area. Whereas the region's past was to extract and send resources to distant places, in the present, a different resource is now being sent "away" – the people themselves.

In Fort McMurray, some five thousand kilometres west of Industrial Cape Breton, coal smoke and quiet streets have given way to roaring traffic kicking up thick clouds of

---

[12] Industrial Cape Breton is situated surrounding Sydney Harbour. The Northside is a local term to refer to the collection of towns and villages located on the northern section of the harbour.

[13] "Goin' down the road" is a popular Cape Breton Island expression for leaving the region to find work elsewhere with the expression also becoming the title of the influential 1970 film about two Nova Scotian men who leave Atlantic Canada to search for employment in Toronto.

dust and the faint but always perceptible smell of pitch. The town is busy, in constant motion with trucks and buses constantly weaving through the small side streets, leaving and returning from the distant industrial facilities and strip-mines to the north. The pounding of hammers and sounds of machinery provide a constant background noise as work crews hastily construct new single-family homes and small apartment buildings, stretching the city limits into the surrounding muskeg. Walking around Sydney Mines sometimes reminded me of stepping into history, yet here I am constantly reminded how new and quickly growing this town is. For most of the twentieth century, the area was little more than a hamlet; its rapid growth from 926 inhabitants in 1951 to 31, 000 by 1981 (Alberta Municipal Affairs 2008), to its 2010 population of 76,797 residents (WBRM Census 2010) resulted primarily from the rapid development of the Oil Sands industry over the past several decades. Fort McMurray is a city of newcomers and "transients"[14] where anyone I meet who has resided here for longer than a decade is jokingly referred to as a "community elder".

While the rationale for establishing Industrial Cape Breton was to produce coal, Fort McMurray's purpose is to allow for the production of oil. Far to the north of the city lie the Oil Sands sites. The Athabasca Oil Sands themselves are more accurately bituminous sands, being made up of mixtures of sand, silica, dirt and the molasses-like petroleum product bitumen (Nikiforuk 2008; Pratt 1976). These bitumen reserves buried underground over a vast region the size of England make Canada's oil reserves the

[14] In Fort McMurray, "transient" has become a common and not altogether derogatory term to refer to temporary workers employed in the Oil Sands region.

second largest in the world, after Saudi Arabia's (Alberta 2007). Yet, extracting the bituminous sands is a labour intensive affair operating on a massive scale. Immense Strip-mines allow gargantuan excavators, power shovels and 400-tonne dump trucks to bring the bitumen to the earth's surface while the subterranean pipes of *in situ* operations pump hot steam deep into the earth to liquefy and extract bitumen located too deeply for conventional strip mining to access. Vast industrial facilities extract and process such bitumen into synthetic crude oil to be pumped through pipelines to southern refineries. Surrounding these facilities are large tracts of land, the muskeg and boreal forest under which the oil sands are located.

Conveying a sense of the size and scope of these operations is a difficult proposition. While I do not wish to descend into hyperbole, seeing such sites firsthand and the extent to which humans can alter a landscape to fill various ends is both awe-inspiring and alarming. Following my trips to such industrial sites for various interviews, training sessions or tours, on my way back to Fort McMurray I would often pull over to the side of the road on a tall hill that offered a wide vista over the landscape to observe the thousands of twinkling lights doting the production facilities and to appreciate the hues that various emissions from the nearby processing facility lent to the sunset. At the base of a hill lay a tailings pond of processing by-products, but this "pond" stretching three kilometres in diameter was easily mistaken for a large natural lake. On the other side of this wide man-made body of industrial and mining waste sits one of the larger of the Oil Sands processing plants. Like a dystopian futuristic city, slate-grey towers, buildings of various sizes, construction cranes, storage tanks and silos, smokestacks

belching white clouds into the sky, and intricate walls and mazes of pipes would stretch across my field of vision. The nearby highway enters into the site delivering and sending forth endless streams of passenger buses and trucks which, from my vantage point, looked the size of ants compared to the magnitude of this industrial facility. To my far right, a strip mine stretching to the horizon resembles a moonscape as the gargantuan machinery, rendered minuscule through the perspective of distance, slowly crawl back and forth across man-made plains.

"Work-camps", the name given to the large, multi-wing, multi-floor dormitories housing temporary workers, dot the region, resembling military barracks or prison quarters.[15] Some house several hundred workers, others over a thousand. Some explicitly resemble the company town in design, built directly bordering particular industrial facilities. Other third-party operated work-camps are found further south between Fort McMurray and the industrial sites, providing temporary lodging for a large section of the nearly 30,000 temporary workers (WBRM Census 2010) operating in the region at any given time and employed within the industry's labyrinthine system of sub-contractors and temporary projects. In Industrial Cape Breton, towns and villages came to be physically structured around the mine shaft and it is apparent that connecting workers to the production process is likewise a key underlying logic in the Oil Sands region, albeit on a much larger immediate scale.

[15] The metaphor of the work-camp as a prison appeared frequently in multiple conversations with long-distance commute workers throughout my fieldwork and is a theme explored in more detail in Chapter Five.

Meanwhile, Fort McMurray itself looks much like a typical North American suburb. I lived in Thickwood Heights/Timberlea, an area of recent development that houses the bulk of the town's population. Instead of row-houses, here the streets are lined with two-storey, single-family detached houses packed together on small plots of land. On the street where I lived, as is common in the area, most of the home-owners have paved their front lawns, turning their single-car driveway into a parking lot of three or four vehicles for their various lodgers. Practically every home-owner rents rooms to temporary workers: the "single-family" home where I live housed four workers from Atlantic Canada and Quebec on the main floor, the basement had been converted into two hastily constructed bedrooms, one occupied by myself and the other by a pipefitter from southern Alberta. Some of the older residents of the town complain that Fort McMurray has just become an extension of the work-camps, filled with temporary workers and transients eager to make a pay-check and leave as fast as they came. The home-owners I speak with point out that renting rooms is the only way to afford the astronomical costs of home-ownership in Fort McMurray while, they are often quick to underline, they (supposedly) only rent rooms to friends, family and the friends of friends from "back home", wherever back home may be: Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Cape Breton, Ontario and so on.

Very few of the people I spoke with claim to be "from" Fort McMurray and even fewer had intentions to stay for long. For nearly everyone I spoke with, leaving Fort McMurray was a key aspect of their life plans with such a plan numbered in months or years and entailing working as much as possible in Fort McMurray and then leaving for

an elsewhere or to return home. Where I lived, the home-owners were half-way through their ten-year plan, a husband and wife working four full-time jobs between the two of them with the end-point of their plan being to move back to Cape Breton, buy a house and start a business. "Fort Mac is work", my host, John-Neil, explained, "But you work hard and then, later on down the road, you can live." Others had less ambitious plans, with a few months in Fort McMurray allowing one to pay financial debts while others simply planned to work indefinitely in the Sands until a better option proposed itself.

The town seemed to be populated with people from across Canada and to a lesser extent the world[16], particularly from regions of failed industry. Former pulp and paper millworkers from British Columbia and New Brunswick, former car manufacturing factory workers from Ontario and former fishers from Newfoundland made up the bulk of those I would meet through friends or speak with in one of the town' many pubs. And with Fort McMurray collecting workers made redundant (Sider 2006) from across Canada, the relationship between Industrial Cape Breton and the Oil Sands region revealed itself as highly asymmetrical. While the Oil Sands and Fort McMurray had so

---

[16] It has been noted that while perhaps less multicultural than the larger metropolitan centres of Canada, Fort McMurray has a diverse population from various backgrounds. While this demographic aspect is outside the focus of this present dissertation, one author describes the multicultural mosaic of the town thusly:

> Fort McMurray has an untidy yet familiar global face. The people who run the mines are generally either confident Calgarians or engineers and managers with Oklahoma and Texas accents. Most of the multinationals employ professionals from Venezuela, India, China, England and the Middle East. Nannies from the Philippines take care of the kids while taxi cab drivers from Ethiopia or Somalia transport the transients...About half of the general workforce hails from Newfoundland or the Maritimes, the poorest parts of Canada. The rest come from struggling rural communities throughout North America (Nikiforuk 2008:41).

fundamentally colored life in Sydney Mines, here, unless someone was from Cape Breton Island, it was simply another industrial elsewhere from which workers came. An Albertan welder emphasized this ambivalence to the regions from whence such workers came: "Here, everyone's from Newfoundland. And Newfoundland, well, that's just everything east of Quebec."

The importance given to production in the design of the town itself is just as apparent as that of Sydney Mines, albeit on a much larger scale. Just as all roads of Sydney Mines led to the mine shaft, so too do these suburban streets focus on delivering workers to the sites north of town as quickly as possible. The area is built around Confederation Way/Thickwood Boulevard, a six-lane circular throughway with all the suburban side-streets leading to this throughway like spokes connecting to the hub on a bike wheel. This circle, roughly three kilometres in diameter, is constantly buzzing with traffic, dirty work trucks and hundreds of passenger buses constantly whirring about, picking up workers at designated stops and looping onto the connected highway that shuttles the tens of thousands of workers northwards to the industrial sites and mines every day.

These two areas of Industrial Cape Breton and Fort McMurray have been each created to fulfill specific needs of capital and organized along lines to allow for certain relations of capital. Formed as "spaces of capital" (Harvey 2001) nearly a century apart, one emerged from an era of liberal capital, the other ostensibly created in the era of neoliberalism. Fittingly, when I would speak of the layout of Fort McMurray to people living in the area, they would use the same metaphor that people in Sydney Mines used to

describe its original planning as well: While in Sydney mines, the town was designed to "feed" workers into the mine shaft, likewise, Fort McMurray and environs was designed to "feed" workers to the industrial sites.[17] And despite the geographic separation of five thousand kilometres, the two regions have come to be connected together and to wider global processes in asymmetrical and dynamic ways, satisfying appetites for mobile labour and for energy along the way.

My initial plan to study the emerging connections of labour migration between Industrial Cape Breton and the Oil Sands region stems from a personal link to Atlantic Canada and a long-standing interest in its socio-economic issues. I was born and grew up on the Western coast of Cape Breton Island, roughly two hundred kilometres from Industrial Cape Breton where I came to do the lion's share of my fieldwork. I grew up on the outskirts of a "working-man's town" to borrow Dunk's (1991) term where the "lifeblood" of the area was said to depend on the local pulp and paper mill. Yet while it had provided employment for an entire generation following its construction in the 1960s (Foote 1979), in my lifetime the Mill was perpetually on the brink of ruin with lay-offs outnumbering new hires. Like many of my generation, I tried and failed to find work in the region and moved away in 1998[18].

---

[17] The idea of workers being consumed by their work-place occurs frequently in literatures of mining, resource extraction and industrial work sites with Nash (1979) and Tausig (2004) providing prominent examples. The instance of workers "giving" themselves to the mill is explored in the dissertation's epilogue.

[18] My own experiences of growing up and moving away from an industrial region have heavily influenced my own interests and understandings of class, subjectivity, issues concerned with labour process and transitions towards neoliberal organizations of work. I explore these issues and my own positionality *vis-à-vis* the present ethnographic study in the epilogue of this dissertation.

Visits home over the ensuing years slowly revealed the growing connections between the Oil Sands and Atlantic Canada. In the late 1990s, a handful of friends and relatives were either working in Fort McMurray[19] or had recently returned and the Oil Sands were still a mysterious place in the far northern reaches of the distant province of Alberta. Yet with each year and each visit to my hometown, these connections seemed to grow stronger. In the early 2000s, nearly every working-age male I knew of was either working "out West"—the popular term to refer to work in Alberta in general and the Oil Sands in particular—or had just returned from a contract and were preparing to venture out once more. The local stores had begun selling specialty luggage tags, in the shape of the outline of Cape Breton Island with the slogan "Fort Mac, I'm back!" imprinted upon it and bumper stickers on the back of returning workers' cars with Oil Sands-related slogans were common sights. During a visit in 2005, it became apparent that the Oil Sands industry had, likewise, "discovered" Cape Breton Island. Major Oil Sands companies and sub-contracting agencies had begun to hold job fairs in the region to recruit workers specifically for out West work while direct and chartered flights from Sydney, Nova Scotia to the Fort McMurray airport and the private airstrips of larger Oil Sands operations began to bring Cape Breton workers to western industrial sites in increasing numbers. A phenomena known as the "twenty-one and seven" took hold: workers from Cape Breton Island would leave for the Oil Sands for twenty-one days of

---

[19] Although the town of Fort McMurray lies some distance from the Oil Sands, Fort McMurray or "Fort Mac" is often used as a shorthand term to signify the Athabasca Oil Sands region and the Oil Sands industry in its entirety.

uninterrupted work, being housed in work-camps during this period, and then return home for a seven-day rest period before beginning the process anew. This process was intrinsically temporary yet long-lasting, with many workers taking part in this pattern over several years.

Over the course of the 2000s as the Oil Sands operations grew in size, public knowledge of these operations in Canada, North America and the world more generally also grew. And yet, the focus remained fixed primarily on the deleterious environmental aspects of these operations from a mainly journalistic standpoint (*e.g.* Levant 2010; Marsden 2007; Nikiforuk 2008). The work and human labour within the Oil Sands came to be largely ignored, with Storey's rigorous meso-level work on temporary "fly-in, fly-out" work in Canadian and Australian resource extraction industries (2009, 2010) being an exception. National and Atlantic Canadian regional newspapers ran several stories concerning this emerging pattern of labour migration[20] yet no in-depth academic study of this commute to the Oil Sands from Atlantic Canada in general or Cape Breton Island in particular had been conducted[21].

---

[20] Articles looking at different aspects of the commute during the 2000s were common in regional and provincial newspapers in Industrial Cape Breton and Nova Scotia with titles such as: "Syncrude recruiter in town; Skilled trades, operations personnel needed" (Erskine 2009), "Does Alberta want more than our workers?; C.B. oilsands labourer questions feasibility of Atlantic trade mission" (Smith 2007); " Fort Mac braces for more newcomers; Nova Scotians have helped double its population in a decade" (Dean 2007); and " Capers get air support from oil company" (Hayes 2007b).

[21] Outside of regional newspapers, Cape Breton is seldom mentioned in regards to the Oil Sands commute. One of the only references I located beyond newspaper sources was in journalist Andrew Nikiforuk's rather condemning book on oil sands operations, in which he quite derogatorily derides Atlantic Canadian labour migrants and temporary workers as such: "Maritimers...make up nearly half the itinerant work force. There is even a Local 420 from Cape Breton. The men work for 420 hours, then quit to go back home and collect welfare" (2008:50). I

As such, I began to assemble a plan of research to examine these emerging dynamics and impacts of labour migration between Atlantic Canada and the Oil Sands industries. As a study interested in mobile labour, the most effective means of research entailed making used of a multi-sited mobile ethnography (Marcus 1995). One destination point, the Oil Sands region, had been selected by virtue of the subject of the research yet I had not determined in which sending region to base my fieldwork. Prior to embarking on fieldwork, I researched many regions sending large numbers of workers to the Oil Sands: former mill towns in New Brunswick, former fishing ports in Newfoundland, former mining sites in central Nova Scotia and former manufacturing towns in Ontario. A variety of reasons led me to select Industrial Cape Breton, a region of several former coal mining towns surrounding a former steel-milling city on the eastern coast of Cape Breton Island on the eastern side of the province of Nova Scotia. On one hand, Industrial Cape Breton shared traits typical of other regions involved in the long-distance commute to the Oil Sands: the region was home to a recently closed or declining central industry, had no secondary industry capable of replacing employment lost and concomitantly held a large population of unemployed workers skilled in industrial or manual forms of labour. Yet Industrial Cape Breton was also unique in several respects. As a series of towns, villages and rural hamlets, Industrial Cape Breton holds a population of nearly 100 000 spread out over roughly 2500 square kilometres (Statistics

---

assume Nikiforuk is referring to the common practice of such contract workers supporting themselves through Employment Insurance in between temporary contracts (a Federal government program which allows temporary financial assistance and training for unemployed workers).

Canada 2012) with a high proportion of individuals involved in the commute.[22] Industrial Cape Breton also has a long history of industrial work and labour struggle (Morgan 2009). As a result of this particular shared history, the local populations are recognized as having strong shared sentiments of working-class identity (Barber 1990, 1992, 2002, 2004; DeRoche 1987, 2002), albeit an identity which has been critically altered as a result of the closing of the main industries throughout the end of the 1990s and early 2000s (Barber 2002; DeRoche 2002, 2005; Gibbs and Leech 2009).

Additionally, I noted a series of parallels and juxtapositions between Industrial Cape Breton and the Oil Sands region which were rather striking. Both were formed as particular spaces of capital (Harvey 2001, 2010) through intense collaborations between the state and capital, formed exclusively as resource extraction regions to produce the central form of energy in its day: coal in the case of Industrial Cape Breton and oil in the case of the Oil Sands region. Both areas figure or figured prominently not only as regions allowing for capital accumulation but also in the formation and continuation of the Canadian nation-state and in policies and practices of national energy security. Both regions came to be populated initially through other instances of creative destruction (Harvey 1990), with Cape Breton Island populated principally in the 1800s through the Scottish Highland Clearances and other events of dispossession in Europe (Barber 1990)

[22] A rough idea of the numbers of individuals partaking in this pattern of labour mobility was established through a review of various regional newspaper articles making reference to mobile workers employed in the Oil Sands region and then later anecdotally through conversations with residents and mobile workers. In Chapter Three I discuss the statistics which attempt to track the number of workers taking part in this commute and the difficulties of enumerating intra-national mobile populations.

while the Oil Sands came to be populated primarily by attracting those made redundant through processes of deindustrialisation in Canada (Ferguson 2011; Sider 2006). And yet, both regions came to be formed in distinctly different eras. Industrial Cape Breton formed in a time of liberal capitalism in which the Company extended incredible paternalistic control over workers and community through company-owned housing and systems of truckage that left workers indebted to the company store (Barber 1990, 2002; Gibbs and Leech 2009; Morgan 2009).[23] Workers and their families worked and lived under such conditions of exploitation until local worker struggles combined with the widespread adoption by Canadian state and industry of the Fordist compact made such work into something secure, stable and long-term (Gibbs and Leech 2009; Russell 1999). In contrast, the Oil Sands, were formed in what has been identified as the beginnings of the neoliberal era (Harvey 2001, 2005, 2010; Lem and Barber 2010; Pupo and Thomas 2009) in which the vertically oriented firm gave way to decentralized methods utilizing flexible (Harvey 1990; Martin 1994), "just-in-time" (Overbeek 2002) methods of organizing production in which work is divided into short-term projects and contracts carried out by labyrinthine systems of sub-contractors (Sennett 1998, 2006; Winson and Leach 2008) and utilizing often temporary workers from distant locales (Storey 2009). While the past system used coercive and paternalistic methods of controlling workers, this system externalizes various costs of production onto state, community and workers themselves (Burawoy 1978; Sider 2006). And yet, the underlying logic in both regions remains the

[23] Such systems of truckage and indentured labour were common in Atlantic Canada as means of employee control and have left certain regions with historical foundations of underdevelopment (Sider 1980, 2006).

same: ensure continued production, maximize profit and maintain control over a workforce (Harvey 2001, 2010).

My initial research questions were two-fold and revolved around analyzing the long-distance commute as a form of labour migration, working from a political economic framework which sees migration foremost as the circulation of labor power (Burawoy 1976; Nartosky 1997; Thomas 2009). My first aim was to counter neoclassical economic frameworks that see migration as motivated purely by market forces with labour "pushed" from areas with high unemployment and "pulled" to areas where labour is required (Massey *et al* 1994; Castle and Miller 1998). This framework has been strongly critiqued in anthropology (Brettell 2003; Glick Schiller and Levitt 2006; Olwig 2001; Trager 2005) and migration studies more generally (Arango 1998; Haines 2007; Hvidt 1975) yet, despite its simplicity (or perhaps because of it) it still continues to heavily inform debate and public policy on issues of migration (*cf.* Martin 2003, 2007). I endeavored to contribute to this critique by examining the social impacts and meanings motivating and created through such migrations following from the works of Olwig (2007), Rouse (1991) and Striffler (2007) as well works on transnationality such as Basch (*et al* 1994) and Glick Schiller and Fouron (2001).

An initial guiding question was to examine why mobile workers continued to return to and invest themselves economically and socially in an area which, as they prove by their perpetual departures to obtain livelihoods elsewhere, does not hold much in way of providing an economically stable future for them. In other words, I was interested in questions of why individuals were choosing a rather challenging lifestyle in which home-

life and work-life was so radically separated in time and space.[24] Other studies of migration have noted that the "circular"[25] aspect of certain migration routes, in which a migrant works in an "away" while frequently returning "home" or while planning/hoping for a return "home", comes about at least partially from the transnational character of such migrations (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Olwig 2007; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003). In one iteration of this line of thought, the state defines certain migrants as "illegal" or allows conditional residency and limits their stay through denial of citizenship. While reliant on such migrant labour, states prevent permanent residency or national citizenship (Basok 2003; Genova 2002; Ferguson 2007). The prime example of such a scenario is the connection between undocumented Mexican migrant farm workers and the United States agricultural industry (Massey *et al* 1998; Rouse 1991). Similarly, conditional residency had been used to provide temporary labour to a number of sectors in various states, often in the form of managed migration programs such as Germany's Gastarbeiter Polish migrant worker program (Martin 2003), the United States' Bracero and H2A programs (Ferguson 2007) and Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers'

---

[24] As Olwig 2001 and Trager 2005 warn, a particular pitfall studying migration and movement is to inadvertently cast such movements as "abnormal" while privileging stability. This issue in discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

[25] There are some issues in casting these instances of movement as one of circular labour migration as such terminology presents such movement as a simple binary between "home" and "away". Rather, emerging from multitudes of individuated migration trajectories which do not necessarily follow such simple binary movements, an overarching yet messy pattern can be discerned. As such, I do not use the terms "circular" or "circuit" uncritically but as heuristic shorthand to refer to such commonalities of experience which can be explained as coming to form particular arrangements. The work-life narratives within this present work explain in more detail the household and individuated migration trajectories which constitute and complicate the movements coming to be included within this "pattern" of mobile work organization.

Program (Basok 2003; Ferguson 2007). Additionally, transnationality creates the conditions for circular migration through non-state mediated ways as well: the perception of cultural difference on the part of the migrant and/or the host society ostensibly creates actual or perceived instances of exclusion from the host society, either instigating returns home or longings for an imagined home (Olwig 2007).

Yet, these explanations held little applicability in the circuit of labour migration between Industrial Cape Breton and the Oil Sands region. The space between home and away is admittedly geographically vast. At five thousand kilometres, it is the spatial equivalent of a Londoner travelling to work in Baghdad on a monthly basis. But as an instance of intra-national rather than transnational migration, the state and legalistic barriers relating to citizenship and choices of permanent relocation hold little direct relevance.[26] Meanwhile, the cultural difference argument contained in literatures of transnationalism[27] seemed less relevant in this case with the perception of cultural difference between a resident of Nova Scotia and one of Alberta being less severe than, to use Olwig's (2007) example, those felt between a rural Jamaican relocating to urban London.

---

[26] Certainly, the state still holds the capacity to play a central role in labour mobility within a country, with China's creation of industrial export zones (Arnold and Pickles 2011) and Mexico's creation of the maquiladora system (Rothstein 2010) being prime examples. Even in Canada's case, Cape Breton had been a target of initiatives to relocate individuals and households (MacLeod 1991) to move elsewhere while I found the existence of the Employment Insurance system to be highly involved in workers' acceptance of temporary, mobile work. These more nuanced factors are explored in more detail in Chapter Six.

[27] Transnationism has been critiqued for its reliance on assumptions of difference and for an underlying reliance on methodological nationalism which assumes the nation-state as a natural, logical category for organizing social life (Barber and Lem 2008; Olwig 2001; Trager 2005. See Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2003 for a riposte to such critiques against transnationalism).

As such, I aimed to use this ethnographic example as a means to provide an explanation for migration that goes beyond legalistic and state-based rationales or which depended on arguments of cultural difference. I had planned on using the notion of "home" to explore the various ways through which people articulate connections and sentiments of belonging in worlds of movement. Home represents a somewhat slippery concept, representing or evoking alternatively and concurrently ideas of belonging (Markowitz 2004; Pocius 1991) , familiarity (Gedalof 2003; Rapport and Dawson 1998), nostalgia (Steffanson 2004), identification (Cuba and Hummon 1993; Rapport and Dawson 1998), household (Douglas 1991; James 1998), family (Douglas 1991; James 1998; Olwig 1999) and nation (Fortier 2003; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001) while concomitantly utilized as a rhetorical device to symbolize a particular form of imagined community (Schiller and Fouron 2001), promote certain sets of beliefs and values (Fortier 2002, James 1998) and constrain identities (Ahmed *et al* 2003; Douglas 1991; Fortier 2003). Home becomes a dense signifier "that encapsulates a concept and a place and encompasses a feeling born of desire, laced with nostalgia" (Markowitz 2004: 23) while providing "a bit of familiar physical and emotional space" (Gedalof 2003: 101). It encompasses memories and wanting, family and ancestors passed on, the sensorial and the intangible (Rapport and Dawson 1998: 8). With these lines of thought in mind, I had planned on making use of the notion of "home" to investigate how people come to form (or not) connections to particular places and the social relations and memories contained therein, to ultimately in the process locate supra-economic rationales for issues which have often been framed in economic terms.

The second branch of the research plan aimed to ethnographically explore the social impacts of these migrations in the home community and upon the families of such workers. Pilot research in the years leading up to the actual fieldwork revealed that such commutes were having noticeable impacts on family life and gendered roles.[28] In a majority of cases, workers taking part in such long-distance commutes were fathers and husbands within a nuclear family unit or similar variant.[29] On one hand, the male's labour migration allowed him to maintain a particular gendered role as a male breadwinner but not without residual impacts on family dynamics. Many of those I spoke with noted the consequences of the "Santa Claus" syndrome: after being away for three weeks of intense

[28] Brettell, in reviewing the literature on men who migrate and women who stay behind, finds that the impacts of migration on issues of gender and vice versa remain inconclusive. In certain circumstances, it is argued that women take over new roles in men's absence while others emphasise that men's labour migration serve to underscore the model of the male as breadwinner and places women more squarely in the domestic sphere (2003: 140-152). Gender roles may change as a result of migration and such changes are obviously influenced by pre-existing gender expectations within sending communities. Brettell admits that such renegotiations may be more of an empirical rather than theoretical matter; that gender relations can be alternatively challenged or reinforced as a result of migration and that such circumstances must be investigated on a case-by-case basis. Similarly, Mill examines the complicated converging impacts on gender emerging from the labour of migrant housekeepers and nannies. Mill explains how such a commodification of household duties frees (primarily Western) females to enter and stay within the workforce. In the process, certain gender expectations are challenged by facilitating female entry and continuation in the workforce while, simultaneously, traditional gender relations are replicated by continuing to tie women to the domestic sphere. The additional dynamics of class and race associated with relying on migrant labour to fulfill this domestic role further complicate the matter. Migrant housekeepers, for their part, may use part of their wages to hire domestic help within their own homes, spiralling these contradictory effects onwards. "In this way, circuits of transnational labour not only are a product of gendered and ethnic hierarchies within a segmented global labour force but also they reproduce the same relations and inequality" (Mill 2003: 46).

[29] Barber (2002a) has made note of the shifting and dynamic versions of households found in Industrial Cape Breton which put the dominance of the traditional North American nuclear family-based household into question. Rather, Barber observed households often in flux as relatives and extended family members came to indeterminately constitute households for short or longer periods of time.

work, father/husbands would see their week at home as a period of vacation or leisure time between work contracts while also experiencing feelings of guilt over their perpetual absence. Thus, they would celebrate their brief time home by lavishing gifts and attention on their children before leaving once more. Routines would be constantly interrupted while the mother/wife in the family unit would be placed in a situation where she would have to take on the role of disciplinarian of the household and reinstate the mundane routines of everyday life once the father figure had left once more. Resentment was frequently noted, with the wife/mother resentful towards the father/husband for forcing her to take on the full weight of taking on the role through which home comes to be defined[30] as the father takes on the "Santa Claus" role while the mother assumes the full responsibilities involved with maintaining a household.

Such absences rippled outwards into the community as well. A number of community institutions depend on volunteered time while the middle-age male favoured for such volunteer activities was also the most likely to be involved in long-distance

[30] The consequence of defining home exclusively through such (predominantly gender-based) social relations is that potential family members left behind may be presented not as social actors but rather social anchors; as potential resources while those who migrate construct webs of relations (Olwig 1999). As such, if home is defined in relation to movement and social relations, then it can also be defined in relation to who does not move. Who moves and who stays are events which take place out of both necessity and choice and are functions of particular relations of power which can alternatively enable or disable (Ahmed *et al*, 2003: 5). Gedalof, following from this and Olwig's line of thought, explores how, in particular, the female body has been appropriated as a metaphor of origin, place, stasis and community, "as the pure space of 'home'" (2003: 95). Gedalof argues that by serving as the grounds from which others derive their identity, women are thus denied the ability to define their identities on their own terms. In a similar line of thought, homes "may well be familiar but they are not always comfortable. Fixed, unchanging places can be experienced as dull and lacking as a restrictive politics of exclusion or as sites of inescapable violence"(Markowitz 2004: 24) while such concepts can serve as varying notions of belonging and exclusion deployed to support particular arrangements of power (Joseph 2002).

commute work. Community leaders I spoke with noted how various rural volunteer fire departments simply did not have enough members to remain in operation and, with a lack of hockey and baseball coaches, youth sports teams faded from community life.

Not all impacts were anticipated or perceived to be negative, however. The underlying motive of workers involved in such labour migrations is to obtain a livelihood and provide for one's family. The reality is that work in the Oil Sands is by-and-large more lucrative and more attainable than local work in Industrial Cape Breton[31] and wages from out West have brought substantial remittances into the local economy.[32] The possibility of such circular migration also allows for the continuation of "home": many

[31] A report by a regional economic development agency on mobile labour in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (ECBC 2009) reported that mobile construction workers found work in the Oil Sands financially more lucrative than employment found locally. While the pay scales were generally the same as what would be found in Industrial Cape Breton, the availability of work was higher and the ability to work large amounts of overtime hours was found to be the factor which made such work lucrative in the Oil Sands region. Interestingly, their status as temporary workers is what allowed such workers to partake in overtime duties and be as such more attractive to employers as available and flexible workers: being free from family responsibilities and social obligations allowed them to be available to work for lengthy periods at any given time. In her study of Mexican migrant workers in the Canadian agricultural industry Basok (2003) similarly notes that situations of temporary work (in which workers are housed in work-camps or bunk-houses and socially and geographically separated from family and friends) creates conditions of "unfree labour" in which such availability and flexibility (rather than cost) is what makes such labour useful to employers. In such cases, temporary workers are not a simple stop-gap response to labour shortage but rather provide a unique form of labour power for employers in their own right.

[32] Reliable data on intra-provincial mobility and remittances flowing between provinces is extremely limited (Corbett 2007) yet the importance of remittances was a point repeated in numerous interviews I conducted with workers and family members. While no reliable quantitative studies exist in regards to remittances and the dynamics of temporary internal migration between the Oil Sands and Cape Breton, the president of Cape Breton's Building and Trades Council estimated that, at the height of the economic "boom" period *circa* 2006, Cape Breton trades workers were remitting upwards of $3 million per week into the local Cape Breton economy (CBC News 2007), while estimates report that a commuter household in Cape Breton stands to earn on average $25 000 more annually than a non-commuter household (ECBC 2009: 71).

noted how, ironically, it is their ability to leave which allows them to stay. A common theme of those I initially spoke with was how it was the very temporariness of labour which they appreciated and if not for such forms of labour, they would be obliged to "uproot"[33] their families to permanently leave the area.

It was with these initial research questions and themes based on preliminary findings that I prepared to embark upon the fieldwork project[34] and began to make preparations to begin the research project by early 2009.

And then, the financial crisis of the late 2000s took hold. Leading up to late 2008 as I was preparing for fieldwork and in the process of planning a research proposal, the sub-prime mortgage crisis as it was labelled at the time, seemingly had no effect on the work I was in the process of planning. The price of oil had risen continuously throughout the 2000s and climbed steadily above $100 a barrel through the first half of 2008 (Goldman 2008). Industry in the Oil Sands region apparently could not expand quickly enough and there seemed to be no limit to the number of workers and amount of labour power required. Contacts in Industrial Cape Breton were informing me that trade unions were practically demanding their members take Albertan contracts and non-unionized workers travelling to Fort McMurray measured the amount of time it took to find work in

[33] "Uprooting" was a common expression among informants in Industrial Cape Breton and underscores the dilemma raised by Ahmed *et al* 2003 and Escobar 2001 of the necessity of avoiding or criticizing essentializing languages while also attending to and recognizing the ongoing importance of place-building and meanings of home for many groups and individuals.

[34] Although, as I explain, my research focus changed significantly during the fieldwork, issues of the impacts of migration on family and community still were among my main concerns and come to be reflected throughout the dissertation. Additionally, questions of such impacts on family and community are explored in an earlier publication, Ferguson 2011.

hours rather than days. But the economic crisis soon spread to other sectors. The price of oil peaked at $145 US/barrel in July 2008, then, following the crash of global equities in October 2008, quickly fell to a low of $30.28 US/ barrel by December 2008 (EIA 2011). In response, investors pulled out of various new Oil Sands construction projects and expansion in the Oil Sands rapidly ground to a halt while management of various oil sands companies quickly began to focus on ensuring that the production process remained efficient and "lean" (Pett 2011).

I reached the primary field site of Industrial Cape Breton in the summer of 2009. Over the course of the few first months of fieldwork it seemed as though the phenomena I had endeavored to examine had all but disappeared. The direct and chartered flights from Sydney Airport to Fort McMurray had been cancelled. The union halls, which only months earlier were encouraging its members to venture westwards, were making announcements that there would be no more work contracts issued from the Oil Sands in the foreseeable future. Instead of talking to mobile workers and their family members about the impacts of absence I found myself instead talking to out-of-work welders, pipefitters and their families about the experiences of unexpected unemployment and the distress that came with losing what they had seen as a long-term, decent job, one that required their perpetual absence from the community but which was expected to be a stable and secure source of work nonetheless. What money had been earned had gone towards debt repayments, house repairs or to the purchase of new vehicles and everyday household expenses while payments from Employment Insurance were quickly coming to an end. Some had found work in other areas of Canada requiring mobile labour and for

those holding the right trade or training, the construction of oil pipelines in New Brunswick had become a new destination. Plans to reopen a coal mine in the nearby village of Donkin or to construct a shipping port in Sydney seemed unlikely and ephemeral while the near future was unknown and frightful. This moment of workers' realization of their contingent status within this organization of work became a crucially important instance to underline and came to strongly influence the direction I undertook in analysing the dynamics of this labour migration and in writing this present dissertation.

Halfway through my fieldwork, mobile work opportunities in the Oil Sands resumed once more as construction projects that were put on hold were revived and operations began to once more require temporary workers from Industrial Cape Breton and other de-industrialised elsewhere, albeit on a smaller scale than at the peak of the "boom period". Yet the fall-out from the financial crisis cast a long shadow on this pattern of work and on my own ethnographic fieldwork and subsequent analysis. It seemed quite apparent that the crisis had underlined workers' own reliance on this commute and a reduction in employment opportunities in Oil Sands following the crisis came to create situations where workers felt the need to compete with one another for what was now perceived as a limited amount of work. In effect, the crisis came to condition such workers to accept less from their relation to this arrangement and in the process allowed capital to externalise certain additional costs of production onto workers themselves. The employer-paid direct flights were cancelled and work-camp accommodations offered only to the most in-demand and skilled of workers while others entered into personally financed re-training in order to be considered among this upper

echelon of "highly skilled" workers. Where workers once were enticed to work in the Oil Sands through chartered flights and accommodations in work-camps provided by the employer, workers in the post-2009 period were paying for their own transportation and finding lodging in Fort McMurray in hopes of improving their own chances of finding employment in the Oil Sands.

Theoretical Directions: Spaces of Capital, Class, Hegemony and Subjectivity

Questions of home and the impacts of migration continued to inform the project and these themes run throughout the dissertation. Yet, the nexus of my work focused on taking this ethnographic moment explained above as exemplifying certain functions of capital: as presenting instances of the ways in which capital endeavors to maximize profits while externalising costs to the greatest degree, how capital strives to create certain categories of workers and how individual subjects come to connect with such hegemonic processes in the formation (and reaction towards the formation) of certain subjectivities. Over the following several paragraphs, I briefly overview several overlapping bodies of literature which aided in the analysing of ethnographic encounters and in determining what this particular ethnographic moment can say back in terms of informing further theoretical development of issues of class, migration and subjectivity.

Harvey's work on spaces of capital allows an avenue to acknowledge that the basic attributes of the capitalist production system include the creation of built environments dedicated towards the means of production (2001 and 2010). These include the immediate sites of production (factories, mills and so forth) as well as the subsidiary elements that equally allow for such production (transportation infrastructure and worker

housing, for example). Harvey describes that a necessity of capital is to create environments and physical landscapes that are efficient for capital in terms of such circulation, production, exchange and consumption while these spaces of capital acknowledge capital's ability (and central necessity) to create and exert control over particular geographical spaces.

Harvey argues that, as such, "space" ought to be seen as a central element of capital, one which requires spatial organization to overcome. Specific instances of capital strive to shape "distinctive spatial configurations" (Harvey 2001: 328) to overcome the limitations imposed by space. Owners of capital, as Harvey often reiterates as a central aspect of his overall theoretical project of reinterpreting Marx, maintain power in large part through a superior command of and mobility within space (2001, 2005, 2010) while "time-space compression" (1990) refers to capital's desire for hyper-mobility and need to overcome the barriers associated with space through revolutions in communications and transportation which link global regions into increasingly complex networks. Such initiatives derive from this larger logic of capital's perpetual quest for mastery of spatial mobility.

Writing in a time when the transitions from Fordism to neoliberalism were slowly coming into view, Burawoy (1985) forecast that hegemonic industrial relations of mature Fordism would slowly give way to new forms of hegemonic industrial relations with capital mobility and the threat of capital flight used to pry concessions back from labour in return for promised employment continuity and corporate financial success. In the period following, much work on globalization and globalizing labour markets have noted

how capital's mobility and elements of time-space compression interweave with issues of labour control. As processes of economic globalisation became entrenched, the capacity of capital to relocate to areas where lower costs, lesser regulation and weaker labour organization allow for greater profits became apparent (Blim 1991). Burawoy's observation became commonplace as threats of such capital flight coming to be used not just to reduce the costs of production but also as a device of labour control aimed directly at labourers themselves (Huws and Dahlmann 2010; Overbeek 2002; Sider 2006). At this same point, governance structures responsible for regulating production-related activates (Ong 1991) also increasingly came to compete with one another for capital investment through reduced regulation and restricting forms of labour organization (Mills 2003) while a global production network of the neoliberalizing multinational corporation comes to take the place of nation-bound Fordist-era firms (Martin 1994).

Yet, Harvey (2001, 2010) notes that, despite the enhanced capacity of capital to be mobile, capital is not infinitely mobile and such limitations have to be underlined and recognized. While capital retains the capacity to be mobile it still requires fixed and stable spatial infrastructures to realize production. Pragmatically, capital possesses the capacity for geographical mobility but mobility with conditions, many of which are supra-capitalist concerns such as the secure backing of credit and finance by state and legal entities, telecommunications networks and transportation infrastructures and various other physical and social infrastructures, from legal services to railways and warehouses, to access to engineers, scientists and manual workers with the required skills.

Capital as such creates the environment in which it operates, creating a physical landscape which reflects its own image. This creation requires an investment and, in the process, capital becomes to a degree fixed in place. Harvey, although relatively silent on the issue of time in relation to capital, notes that capital is intrinsically involved in locking itself into certain relationships through the creation of such landscapes which, once created, are no longer easily mutable. Such fixed landscapes become both "a crowning glory of past capital development and a prison which inhibits the further progress of accumulation" (Harvey 2001:247) as capital creates its own spatial boundaries in the elimination of others. This reveals a fundamental tension in capital: its quest for hyper-mobility through time-space compression but also its embeddedness in fixed space. While capital strives to quickly realize its returns and be hyper-mobile, capital embedded in land has a longer amortization period, a longer horizon to realize profits (Harvey 1990, 2001, 2005, 2010). Meanwhile, this embeddedness in fixed space also embeds certain routine uses of space and relations to space. A built environment commits those who use it to certain patterns over an extended period of time, locking in certain patterns of spatial organization and conditioning the forms of social organization which take place within these landscapes.[35]

[35] The physical landscape and physical organization of labour limiting certain activities and conditioning certain subjectivities has been long recognized. An aspect of Braverman's deskilling hypothesis (1974) was that Taylorism with its time studies and the disintegration of tasks into their most elementary movements, the implicit goal of this system of scientific management was to turn workers into undifferentiated human energy. In theory, once this feat was accomplished, through effectively limiting the autonomy of workers such workers would be effectively locked into these relations.

A study of migration can effectively focus on how potential labour from one site comes to be connected to production in another and becomes essentially interested in the formation and maintenance of such connections. A focus on migration, then, allows for an examination of how spaces of capital come to be connected through migration and how particular spaces of capital may have access to labour through migration as a purposeful element of design. Burawoy, along these lines, describes migrant labour as "a system...characterized by the institutional differentiation and physical separation of the processes of renewal and maintenance" (1976:1050) while Narotsky follows that migration can be "seen as the circulation of people in their capacity to be the carriers of labour power" (1997:79).

I do agree that a focus on the productive elements of migration is critical and make use of elements of political economic-influenced approaches to migration. At the same time, I am hesitant to simply bracket off elements of migration that are not easily subsumed under such approaches. It has been extensively noted that migration is a dynamic process motivated by and shaping various political, social, cultural, economic and historical elements (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Kearney 1986; Olwig 2007; Trager 2005). Migration is, to put it mildly, a complex set of events and processes, loaded with rich symbolic meanings for those who embark on or are impacted by mobile livelihoods, a point dramatically underscored by those who concentrate on migration through lenses of transnationalism (Basch *et al* 1994; Glick Schiller and Levitt 2006; Olwig 2001; Trager 2005) as a series of border crossings (Koshravi 2010), from an

experiential point of view (Hage 2005) and as ways of maintaining family bonds and social connections across the globe (Brettel 2003; Olwig 1997, 1998, 1999, 2007).

With this being said, the issue of class has been largely ignored in studies of migration and seldom comes to the forefront of analysis. Rouse (2009), while congratulating approaches that do account for class, notes that within anthropology a contemporary focus on transnationalism has led to disproportionate attention in regards to the relation of migration to the state while allowing for underemphasizing of the connection of migration to overarching relations of capital. Others have made effective strides in bringing issues of class to the forefront of studies of migration (examples of such being Barber 2004; Barber and Lem 2010; Barber and Lem 2008; Ong 2006; Amit 2002) and underlining that migration, relations of production and configurations of class intersect and are mutually constitutive. Yet such approaches remain in the minority. A political economic view then allows for a focus on economic, cultural, political and concomitant social factors that produce inequalities related to patterns of migration (Thomas 2009) and allows for an appreciation of the laboured aspect of such migrations.

There are a number of underlying factors that form the more general terrain upon which these foundations of classed migrations are built: the embrace of neoliberal policies and practices by capital and state (Harvey 2010), policies of government and actions of capital which cause underdevelopment in certain regions (DeRoche 2003; Gibbs and Leech 2009) and ostensible labour shortages in others (Basok 2003), and particular regional identities and histories which posit migration as a viable option (Corbett 2007; Massey *et al* 1993), to name just a few.

A key avenue for accounting for such formations within this dissertation has been through an attention to the formation of surplus labour and particularly how such surplus labour is realized through fixity and mobility. A central aspect of capital accumulation, Marx noted, was the presence of an "industrial reserve army" (1977). Such a surplus labour population serves two main functions. First, the presence of unemployed labour keeps the power of existing labour in check, making it difficult for labour to request higher wages and benefits. Second, surplus labour allows for expansion and the possibility of expansion of production. As surplus value produced by employed workers is reinvested into production, the need for additional labour power is met through drawing upon pools of surplus labour: unutilized labour comes to exist as reserve productive capacity. As such, surplus labour becomes an intrinsic necessity for the continuation of accumulation and capital has an implicit interest in creating and maintaining the ability to mobilize such industrial reserve armies through a host of mechanisms such as creating latent reserves (through introducing women, children or a peasantry into the labour process, for instance); introducing technology and mechanization to create unemployment in a particular sector; encouraging population growth; and encouraging migration (Harvey 2001, 2003, 2005).

Migration has become an increasingly key tactic for accessing and mobilizing reserve labour across a host of sites and spaces of capital and in connecting those sites and spaces to wider global relations. Castles and Miller (2003) notes how since at least the 1960s, migrant labour has become a structural feature of Western labour markets, while others have noted how processes of decolonization and subsequent economic

restructuring through the IMF and World Bank have created surplus labour populations in parts of Africa for European labour markets (Merrill 2011) and in Mexico for United States and Canadian labour markets (Basok 2003). Meanwhile, Sider (2006) has detailed how colonial histories and processes of capital create regions of redundant workers, conditioned (and grateful) to accept work situations and labour mobility that others would refuse. Arnold and Pickles (2011) explores how the constitution of China as a manufacturing export economy and the creation of the "China Price" depended on state-coordinated migrations into the Yangtze and Pearl River Deltas to create densely populated industrial export zones. Rothstein (2010) examines the flows of internal migration in Mexico in the establishing of maquiladoras in northern Mexico and in Chiapas, also for the purpose of creating export economies. In other lines, Satzewich (1991) has detailed how the Canadian agricultural industry was historically founded on labour provided by immigrants while this industry has continuously strived to access other forms of cheap and controllable labour.

Resource extraction industries and the oil industry in particular have been particularly innovative in creating and accessing mobile labour forces. South Africa, Zambia and other regions of Africa have long colonial and post-colonial histories in which complex systems of temporary labour and work-camps (Burawoy 1976), labour migrations and practices of urbanization (Ferguson 1999) were (and continue to be) used in coal, precious metals and mineral mining industries. Meanwhile, the Middle Eastern oil industry has continued historical connections of temporary and indentured labour from parts of Asia, coming to utilize Pakistani and Indian migrant workers as a foundational

source of labour (Cohen 1996; Kendall 2012). Improvements in communications and transportation have further allowed for transformations in the procurement of distant work forces with the resource extraction industry being an international innovator in shifting from creating company towns to finding forms of securing temporary and mobile workforces (Storey and Shrimpton 1989; Storey 2010). Mining operations in remote areas such as in northern Saskatchewan for uranium (Russell 1999), sparsely habituated areas of Australia (Storey 2009) and the off-shore oil industry of the United States (Higgins 2005) and beyond (Frickel and Freudenburg 1996) have pioneered the use of fly-in/fly-out methods of bringing in workers temporarily, allowing for the creation of labour-intensive industries in sparsely habituated regions or as in the case of off-shore oil platforms, in areas where human life cannot normally be supported.

Yet, Harvey notes a contradiction in the establishment of mobile reserve labour which should be underlined. Capital strives to gain mastery *in* space through the creation of geographies of accumulation while striving to gain mastery *through* space in the creation of mobile labour by continuously attempting to create surplus labour that is "accessible, socialized, disciplined and of the requisite qualities (i.e.: flexible, docile, manipulable and skilled when necessary)" (2001:58). Yet, despite threats of capital flight, labour ultimately has the capacity to be more mobile than production as the fixed capital of a factory cannot be moved with the same ease as the body of a mobile worker (Harvey 2001 and 2010). Capital then strives to transform mobile labour into captive labour (Harvey 2010) through a host of mechanisms and processes and often utilizes or benefits from conditions of capture once mobility has been achieved. Such conditions can

come through state apparatuses of defined citizenship and border controls (Basok 2003; Koshravi 2010; Satezwich 1991), through ways of managing and establishing lines of movement (Russell 1999; Ferguson 2010) and through more nuanced hegemonic processes.

Processes of hegemony are a long thread running through the themes of spaces of capital, labour migration and subjectivity explored in this dissertation. The particular ways in which I make use of this often ill-defined concept does require some elaboration. Hegemony has served as something of a slippery concept, referring alternatively or concomitantly as an avenue to explore or represent the functions and processes of power in society, the ability of such power to exercise coercion and consent while concealing and obscuring the exploitative elements of labour processes and the abilities of relations of power to hide behind veneers of taken-for-granted common sense (Smith 1999: 228-242). Hegemony, Comeroff and Comaroff state, derives much of its explanatory capacities precisely from this wide-spread versatility which allows the concept to hold applicability in a vast range of aims and purposes involved in analysing power relations. It becomes "good to think with; as a relatively empty sign, it has been able to serve diverse analytical purposes and positions" (1991:19). Yet this flexibility risks a dilution of the concept and has allowed notions of hegemony to be burdened with explicative power that strains the concept's usability, risking that it becomes a heavy-handed synonym for classical Marxist ideas of ideology and false consciousness (Crehan 2002; Smith 1999). In these lines, Scott, for instance, describes the concept straight-forwardly

along the lines of "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas....Hegemony is simply...this process of ideological domination" (1985:315).

Crehan productively suggests a return to Gramsci to shed clarity on hegemony as a concept allowing for more nuanced understandings of processes of power by using the concept not as a description of power *tout court* but rather an avenue towards an examination of how power comes to be produced and reproduced (2002). Such a viewpoint moves the focus away the domain of beliefs and values, from the popularized ideational view of hegemony as derived from Raymond Williams' interpretation of the concept as "lived systems of meanings and values" (1983: 110), to a heuristic notion which includes the material concerns which contribute to the exercise of power. Hegemony becomes as Crehan adeptly explains, a way towards:

> mapping an ever-shifting landscape of power that includes both accounts of 'reality' as these confront particular people in particular places and the hard realities that lie outside the realm of discourse...What constitutes a particular hegemonic landscape at any given moment – remembering that this is always only a single moment in a ceaseless power struggle where power is never totally secure – is likely to include an extremely complicated intertwining of force and consent and of the entanglement of accounts of reality with hard realities that are more than discourse. What hegemony 'is', therefore, is necessarily extraordinarily protean. (2002:174-175)

Hegemony, as a process, creates the conditions for the function of relations of power yet is never exclusively "top-down" as suggested by accounts that view the term as synonymous with ideology but rather occurs in social fields of contestation, conflict and renegotiation. Smith, for instance, explains that various components of social life can be alternatively seen as coming to play into hegemonic processes or acquiring a hegemonic character at different times and in different ways with material and ideological components coming to set limits of determination and constraint and creating particular

worldviews or "cultural fields" and at times coming to operate through particular social institutions (1999:237-238).

In terms of how such processes come to impact upon particular subjects, I define the interaction of hegemony with individual selfhood as the formation of subjectivity (*cf* Foucault 1982; Knights and Willmott 1989; Lem 2001). In terms of the formation of classed subjectivities—the aspects of subjectivity related to relations of production—the concepts of hegemony and subjectivity allow routes with which to engage with the concept of class in an increasingly fragmented and neoliberalizing work world. While the connection of migration to processes of capital is broadly recognized and some works approaching a connection of migration and hegemony (Cohen and Sirkeci 2011), connecting class and migration continues to challenge anthropology and studies of migration more generally (Barber and Lem 2008, 2010). Mobility and fragmentation of workforces have made analyses which focus on class as collective identity difficult (Smith 1999) while the ways though which class comes to motivate and become altered through labour migration continues to be under-theorized. Precarious and contingent work, labour mobility and expectations of labour mobility have served to individualize and atomize workers in the neoliberal era (Sennett 2006; Winson and Leach 2008) and ways to account for class in an era highlighted by such fragmented work experiences (Collins 2002) need to be developed further. As such, while spaces of capital can be used to analyse the geographies in which labour mobility transpires and interventions from literatures of the political economy of migration allow for an appreciation of the connections and movements between and within such spaces, an appreciation of

subjectivity allows for recognition of the individual's placement within such relations of power.

Subjectivity in a Foucaldian sense allows for a recognition of the connectedness of power to the self and to the constitution of the self and how conceptions of identity come to be formed through interactions with the world and surrounding power relations in which they are enmeshed (Foucault 1982). Subjectivity becomes a product of relations of power through which our conceptions of self-identify are formed. Knights and Willmott (1989) have argued that such attention to how the subject is constituted in relations of power can be applied within political economic studies to allow for nuanced approaches towards understanding power as not simply repressive but also a potentially productive element of life. Subjectivity, in detailing how similar social configurations come to create similar perceptions and experiences of the world, allows an avenue towards exploring how individuals come to relate to certain relations of production and how certain classed realities and classed subjectivities come to be formed and experienced.

Certain Marxist works have underscored how combining investigations of the self and issues of class aid in the analysis of hegemonic processes through which particular conceptions of identity and subject position come to allow for the continued functions of capital. Willis' (1977) work showed how the "lads'" experiences of and reactions towards formal education led them to develop an antagonistic relation to authority, a strong sense of collectivity and a valuation of manual over mental labour, in effect embracing the norms and values of certain working-class identities before entering the industrial labour

process. Burawoy's (1979) analysis of the factory floor showed how the game of "making out" allowed workers to achieve certain masculine identities and take ownership of their productive capacities, all while obscuring their production of surplus value and allowing relations of production to continue unabated. Additionally, Dunk's (1991) study of the "boys" showed how leisure activities reproduced and reinforced the masculinised class identities and norms of solidarity, bravado and contempt for authority which allowed classed relations in the workplace to carry on without interruption. In these three instances, attention to subjectivity (even if that particular language is not consistently explicit across the varying theoretical traditions embraced by the above authors) allows for an exploration of how subjects can secure identities and find ways to resist the structures in which they play a part while concomitantly contributing to the continuation of these same structures and conditions while also allowing for a move beyond a binary of the (resisting) autonomous individual and a determining structure (Knights and Willmount 1989:546). I make specific use of the term "classed subjectivities" to refer to the elements of subjectivity emerging from an individual's relation to production, choosing "classed subjectivity" over "class subjectivity" to emphasis the processual (as opposed to structural) elements of such subjectivities and to emphasize that subjectivities are in constant flux rather than being fixed.

Class, for my purposes, is framed as a subject position rather than a purely analytical category, although I will return to issues of class consciousness which seem increasingly outdated in a globalizing and fragmented work world in due order (Sennett 2006; Standing 2011). One's class position provides something of a common position

vis-à-vis one's relation to production, although does not predict nor dictate the lived experiences or expressions of such a subject position (Dunk 1991; Lem 2001). Classed subjectivity, then, emerges from the "distinctive relations based on the conditions of making a living" (Lem 2001:291) and emphasizes that class still retains analytical significance in that "it defines the fundamental tensions, antagonisms and conflicts of interest that prevail in a social and economic system that remains based on the production of goods by one class and the appropriation of surplus by another" (Lem 2001:289).

Fundamentally emerging from the murky threshold between the individual and hegemonic process, such a concept allows for the recognition of how we come to relate to production in a time when the ideas of class consciousness emerging from the factory floor and the solidarity of workers labouring side-by-side in a particular place over a long period of time is no longer the central organizing principle in people's day-to-day lives. It allows for recognitions of how power relations shape peoples' lives and become the foundation for the provision of certain identities, even if people do not articulate their relations to power explicitly. It permits an expanded appreciation of class, following from interventions towards complicating and nuancing ideas of class from Thompson (1963) and Wolf (1999) in which class processually emerges from historical and situational contexts rather than being inherently structural.

Within the social sciences, there has been overlap and ambiguity towards the use of subjectivity versus identity with some authors seeing the terms as near-identical (Benwell and Stokoe 2006) while others acknowledge the terms as referencing different elements of the constitution of self (Hall 1996). I firmly differentiate between the two

with identity referring to our conscious representations/ understandings of self and subjectivity referring to the ever-shifting positions and ensuing formations of social beings in relations of power; subjectivity may come to shape ones' identity but the relationship is complex rather than linear and not necessarily mutually constitutive. Subjectivity underscores that we are subjects *in* relationships and also subjects *to* sets of relationships (Foucault 1983). Classed subjectivity must then be differentiated from class identity with the latter referring to the conscious elements of one's interpretation of their relation to production while classed subjectivity refers to the elements of one's self shaped through one's relation to production which may not necessarily be articulated or consciously reflected upon.[36] In short, while identity is how we see and represent ourselves, subjectivity refers to how power and the hegemonic processes in which we are enmeshed operate in shaping how we perceive and function in the world.

As such, the processes of the ongoing formations of certain subjectivities are necessarily connected to situational and historical contingencies. The examples of Willis, Burawoy and Dunk above speak to the formation of classed subjectivities in a Fordist era, when the presence of presumably secure industrial factory labour for the Lads, the Boys and Burawoy's workers was a taken-for-granted element of life. While Harvey, in examining neoliberalism "from above", has defined neoliberalism as ultimately a project

[36] Lem, for instance, on her study of vineyard owners and workers in Occitan, France, notes how a working-class identity is incorporated into local cultural regional identities regardless of how individuals come to be related to production. Vineyard owners claim such identities, even while being politically and economically separated from workers in terms of wealth, lifestyle and social and political commitments (Lem 2002). I would argue that a farm worker and farm owner may engage in the same forms of manual labour and claim the same working class identities but may not share the same forms of classed subjectivity. Classed subjectivities operate on much more subtle terrain and can resist attempts to be articulated.

with the aims of restoring class power (2001, 2005, 2010), works looking at neoliberalism "from below" have focused on the means by which workers come to be coerced or to consent to taking on certain subjectivities and new relations to production in which they are expected and conditioned to become flexible, adaptable and individuated workers (Martin 1994; Sennett 2006; Rose 2006), a Homo Economicus which becomes "an entrepreneur of the self" (Foucault 2008). Yet, these works have been strangely mute on seeing these new subjectivities as fundamentally classed: these transitions of classed subjectivities emerging from Fordist relations to classed subjectivities emerging from neoliberal relations are a central theme running through this current dissertation.[37]

This dissertation deals with both the concepts of "work" and "home" and the created distinctions (or lack thereof) between the two while acknowledging firmly that neither is a static site or unchanging source of identity or subjectivities. Traditionally, the work-place seen as the place of creating class (Burawoy 1979, Dunk 1994) while the home may serve as a site for "doing gender" (George 2005: 115) yet there is considerable overlap between the two as both sources of identities and foundations of subjectivities. While the overlap between class and gender cannot be overshadowed such subject positions further complicate issues of labour migration. The notion of home is tied to the notions of gender and identity but "identities are not free-floating, they are limited by borders and boundaries" (Sarup 1994: 95). Changing labour practices and transformations brought about through movement have effects on how certain identities are negotiated

[37] An exception to be discussed later is Dunk's (2002) examination of changing subjectivities among former millworkers undergoing retraining in a de-industrializing northern Ontario town.

and how elements of home, work and the separation between the two (or lack thereof) is interpreted.

Broughton and Walton (2006) Deutsch (2002) and Barber (2002a, 2002b) have noted how certain economic conditions and shifts in labour patterns have allowed for or necessitated alterations in traditional Western conceptions of family life and shifts in structured gendered household divisions of labour. The realities of downsizing, shift-work and the need for dual incomes have, especially for working-class families, re-organized previous gendered expectations in the household. Broughton and Wallace argue that the ideal of the blue-collar breadwinner is coming to an end, that "as de-industrialization hits home, a chapter closes on the forms of masculine identity that carefully intertwined work and fatherhood but new strategies and adaptations point to the historical fluidity of what constitutes a gendered identity" (2006: 10). Barber, meanwhile, notes that in western Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, economic hardships have inspired a "culture of making do" (2002) where family life, kinship arrangements, community and home become much more fluid, transformative and dynamic categories than the static Euro-North American ideal of the nuclear family as actors move between and through a variety of households and home arrangements over the course of their lives. These examples are not to suggest that economic factors are the sole or principal elements affecting performances of gender in the home. Deutsch (2002), for instance, notes that among the blue-collar workers in his study, their conceptions of fatherhood and masculinity were formed partially in a climate of changing labour conditions but also consisted of renegotiations of identity spurred by their reactions against the stoic models

of fatherhood provided by their own fathers. In sum, migration and shifting labour conditions, although not necessarily the prime motivator, can and do lead to a renegotiation of gender relations in the household while gender relations can in turn play a firm role in motivating the acceptance of changing conditions in the work place.

Building from this, Mill reminds us that gender expectations and the resulting role strain are not unique to women and that the impetus of labour migration for many men is the pursuit of gender identities (such as the breadwinner) that cannot be realized at home (2003). Labour migration, then, may be seen as a route to access resources, economic and symbolic, necessary to claim a male adult status at home while the failure to realize economic security and such gender identities force men to renegotiate their status.

What kind of work do you do? Fieldwork, Methods and Work-Life Narratives

While the above theoretical concerns are the mortar of this dissertation, my experiences of fieldwork remain the foundation. Fieldwork consisted of a period of residing primarily in Industrial Cape Breton for a year with a five-week sojourn to Fort McMurray undertaken partway through this period. My experiences of fieldwork are interwoven throughout the following chapters and thus this section serves to give the reader a basic overview of fieldwork experience with the particularities of certain ethnographic moments and research methods explored in more detail in the chapters to come.

I arrived in Industrial Cape Breton in the summer of 2009 with my wife, Lucie, and infant son, William. The first several months in Industrial Cape Breton were spent becoming implicated in the community in various ways, either through taking the time to

slowly get to know our neighbours and residents of the area and getting involved with various volunteer and community activities, public events and political activities such as frequent "town hall" meetings. Spontaneous conversations and random observations proved invaluable in obtaining a generalized contextual understanding of the socio-economic-historical contexts of the regions while I slowly became acquainted with various individuals involved in Oil Sands mobile work patterns and their family members. Partway through this period, I located an educational institution that had taken a mandate to train local workers specifically for Oil Sands work and I enrolled in several industrial safety courses over the span of a month, which gave me in-depth contact with a variety of workers either undergoing training in order to secure work out West for the first time or "veteran" commuters upgrading their skills in the context of greater competition for work following the financial crisis. Meanwhile, my wife Lucie took part in various activities in the community, enrolling in classes at a local art institution where she met and introduced me to many (primarily female) individuals who were implicated in long-distance commute work, either having worked out West themselves or in relationships with someone working out West. Meanwhile, William constantly proved to be an invaluable ice-breaker in starting conversations with people in public areas and events.

By the time I had been in the field for six months, I had made a number of contacts in the community. As I prepared to go out West for the Fort McMurray portion of fieldwork, I followed the same network-mediated (Olwig 2007) path of migration that many others from the area took part in. An informant in Industrial Cape Breton placed me

in contact with acquaintances out West and I was able to find lodging in Fort McMurray in two separate households that rented out rooms to commute workers. During my time in Fort McMurray, I took part in regular conversations with the commuting workers in the households in which I was staying and continued conversations with many commuting workers with whom I had spoken in Industrial Cape Breton, including several who, as lodgers in work-camps to the north of town, were able to grant me entry into these rather security-intensive temporary worker accommodations. Additionally, prior to departing to Fort McMurray, I had been in contact with the major Oil Sands companies about my research project and three out of four of these companies allowed me some form of entry into their industrial sites. One company allowed me a rather scripted full-day tour of their operations, allowing a first-hand glimpse at the strip mine, *in situ* and bitumen extraction sections of the industrial operations. A second, to my surprise, allowed me to sit in on and participate in a new worker safety orientation given to a group of temporary workers from Newfoundland about to embark on a project to replace arrays of pipeline within one of the industrial sites and to tour their private air-strip. Finally, a third company allowed me to sit in on another new worker orientation, this time aimed at incoming permanent employers and machine operators.

After a busy five weeks in Fort McMurray, I returned to Cape Breton and continued engaging with community members. With a broader understanding of the commute by this point, I was able to focus on particular themes of interest. I also began during this time to explore particular socio-economic and political programs and plans being implemented in Industrial Cape Breton, including attempts to reopen a former coal

mining operation in the village of Donkin and attempts by local community leaders and politicians to attract investment to construct a new shipping port in the region. These issues, while not explicitly related to the long-distance commute, allowed me insights into how themes of local economic decline, unemployment and out-migration were formulated and problematised in local public and political discourses and policies. The advantage of my research topic was that local economic conditions and local/national politics are a preferred subject of discussion locally, while the Oil Sands commute was widely recognized as both a central element impacting on the region ("Everyone has a brother in Fort Mac" was a common expression) and still novel enough that most people perceived it as a unique set of circumstances.[38]

These activities allowed me to formulate a rather broad and multi-faceted understanding of labour migration between these two regions and everyday understandings of the impacts of various economic processes on individuals, families and communities in general. In addition to participant-observation methods, I also applied a more focused method of interviewing to obtain more detailed information on specific experiences of those involved with labour migration between the Oil Sands and Industrial Cape Breton which I label the "work-life narrative". I developed the work-life narrative

[38] Though many recognized the novelty of this emerging pattern of labour mobility, few saw little rationale in examining the commute in an academic sense. While many workers and family members were quite open and generous with their time in explaining their experiences to me, most mobile workers were also quite open in informing me that my time would be better spent by getting involved in such work rather than studying it. For instance, Angus, introduced in the prologue, while being amazingly generous and patient in talking to me about this style of work, was never shy to share his thoughts on my own project, frequently telling me to "Fuck your doctorate, you'll never make any money. Go to Fort McMurray, be a carpenter, you'll make a hundred thousand a year."

interview technique based on methods which employed the life-story method (Linde 1993), the life-history method (Crapanzano 1984) and other similar narrative interviewing techniques (Behar 1993; Rapport and Overing 2000). Such techniques of narrative interviewing, at their base, revolve around informants constructing a life-story as a sequence or layering of meaningful events, experiences, memories and so forth while keeping in mind that such sequences may not necessarily be chronological nor hold a consistent continuity. Forms of narrative can reveal history and culture as lived, "the struggles of real people" over time (Peacock and Holland 1993: 370), while an assemblage of narratives and connected life histories from an area can, through its multivocality, add to our understandings of how local and regional histories come to be articulated by our informants (Blackman 1991: 58). The naturally situated environment of such narrative derived through conversation also allows for a different quality of experience to emerge than that from formal interviewing.

In carrying out interviews I was primarily interested in individuals' connections to work and how people came to articulate their work-lives in relation to other aspects of their life experiences. I operated under the assumption that, for many, their relation to work provides a major structuring element within their lives. Out of a vast array of possible interview techniques this seemed to be a productive method in gaining an understanding of individuals' work histories, their migration trajectories and how they perceive their own relations to work and their changing work identities. In setting up such interviews, I avoided the formality intrinsically implied by the term "interview" and instead referred to these meetings as "talks". I strove to conduct such "talks" in settings

familiar and intimate to the informants. Many of these discussions took place in informants' kitchens over strong brewed tea or occasionally in the local cafe or diner over a meal of deep-fried scallops while I kept such talks extremely open-ended and informal. Typically, an opening question along the lines of "Tell me what kinds of work you've done over your life" would lead into multiple conversations that came to form life narratives revolving around topics of work, unemployment, labour mobility, place and family.[39]As such, this method of collecting an assemblage of narratives focusing on informants' experiences of labour migration, work and connections to work and movement was one of my primary activities throughout the year of fieldwork[40] while

[39] Discussing the work that one does or has done in one's lifetime is also a common base of informal conversation in the region which made it an even more effective research technique. For instance, before knowing about my own intentions or questions, one interviewee that came to be involved in the project subjected me to his own version of the work-life narrative before agreeing to take part in an interview, and spent over an hour questioning me about the various types of work I had done over my life. At a later point my fieldwork, he told me he had done so because "knowing what kind of work a person's done is the best way to get to know a person".

[40] Dunk's 1991 study of working-class men suffers from an issue concerning gender, family and class which he did not completely resolve (despite attempting to do so in Dunk and Bartol 2005): If class comes to be formed on the factory floor and through leisure activities outside the labour process, then how is class experienced by the wives, partners and family members of those who do not work on the factory floor themselves. Do they become "classless", or is their class position determined through such connections? As such, I was originally concerned that this technique of the work-life narrative may risk such a gendered bias and held reservations about how this technique would play out if I came to interview a female in a "traditional nuclear family" who did not participate in monetarily remunerated labour and if she would come to define her work trajectory in terms of her husband's work-life. While this issue remains unresolved on the theoretical level, ethnographically, I found this particular formation of the "traditional nuclear family" to be a rarity in the context of Cape Breton, with members of both genders having rich work histories and in enabling worker struggle, either in the work-place (a point also noted by Barber 1990 in her study of female fish packing plant workers in a town within Industrial Cape Breton) or through their roles in the home (Barber 2002a). In the few cases in which women held for part of their lives the status of "homemaker" (their term, not mine) while their partners worked outside the house in monetarily remunerated labour, they typically richly defined their labour within the home of managing a household and raising children. While they represented

recognizing these narratives as "always fragmented intimations of experience" (Ochs and Capps 1996: 21) and interpreting them as such.

While I was involved in numerous spontaneous conversations that came to inform this project, in terms of work-life narratives I recorded interviews with twenty-five informants. Of these twenty-five, I pursued in-depth work-life narratives with six individuals and four couples who were interviewed at times separately and at times together. Out of this number, I have selected three sets of work-life narratives to analyse within the present dissertation. These narratives were selected because they are, on one hand, broadly representative of many common experiences I encountered among those I spoke with and, on the other hand represent fundamentally unique and individual experiences of mobile labour in their own right. As such, Chapters Three, Five and Seven are based on the work-life narratives of three individuals and households: George, a scaffolder who began a career in Fort McMurray; Ann, a work-camp kitchen aid; and a young couple, Penny and Jonathan, who had recently become implicated in the Oil Sands commute.

Studies of working-class culture have been traditionally male-orientated (*cf.* Braverman 1974; Burawoy 1979; Willis 1977; Dunk 1991; Dagenais 2010). Dunk noted that, "indeed, families or couples are usually defined as working class in reference to the man's occupation" (Dunk 1991: 18) while still not, in my opinion, finding a successful

---

such labour as sometimes liberating or sometimes repressive, it was on at least equal footing with the labour of their partners (and often described as more crucial to a household's wellbeing).

method to overcome this preponderance.[41] Meanwhile, attempts to counter such trends and acknowledge the gendered facet of class have attempted to do so with a focus on female labourers[42] (*cf* Ong 1991; Rofel 1999), although I am unsure that such an approach completely resolves the interplays between class and gender.

In my own fieldwork, I was operating in a field of work that has been, like much of construction and resource extraction work in North America, strongly populated by men. Through the various work-life narratives, I have attempted to go beyond an exploration solely of masculine classed subjectivities by focusing on the broad spectrum of subjects involved or impacted by such work arrangements. In doing so, I underline that the impacts of the labour process itself spread beyond the immediate site of work, while the labour process is shaped by the broader circumstances in which it is situated

---

[41] See previous footnote

[42] As Dunk (1991) admits, his own gender placed him within the particular "masculine" sphere of life occupied by the boys and made accessing other spheres of experience difficult, a point also paralleled by Ong (1991) in her study of female Malaysian factory workers and subsequent exclusion from traditional male spheres. This particular chain of events has much to do with the ethnographer's positionality and the nature and limitations of the fieldwork experience but also, I underline, with capital's tendency to seize upon, utilize and exaggerate social differences and commonalities. Along these lines as Harvey notes

> Go into any workplace – like a hospital or a restaurant – and note the gender, race and ethnicity of those doing the different tasks and it becomes evident how power relations within the collective labour process are distributed among different social groups (2010: 104).

Capitalists use the power of social difference to their advantage and to prevent "the inevitable commonality of position in the workplace being consolidated into a movement of social solidarity and to sustain a fragmented and divided workforce" (Harvey 2010: 104).

(Burawoy 1985; Ong 1991). Through Penny and Jonathan's ethnography, I examine how household decision-making strategies related to work and migration develop and play out, while Ann's narratives underline how processes and spaces of capital make use of pre-defined gender roles to create gendered routes of migration, with the reproductive labour of "home" now being commodified and industrialized within the industrial work-camp setting.

As fieldwork progressed and I felt more comfortable in my role as a researcher, more knowledgeable about the dynamics of going out West and cognisant of where my own gaps of knowledge lay, compiling these narratives became less formalized and much more conversational. Such meetings often came to be more social encounters than research activities. The act of textualising such narratives inevitably results in certain losses of context, compression of details and editing on the part of the author but I have tried to identify and let speak such contradictions and differing perspectives when they arose and imply that none of these stories are finished, that they are all works in progress which allow an heuristic avenue to concretely explore the formations of subjectivities.

This dissertation is divided in three sections which in turn examine the political economy of migration and resource extraction, the labour-receiving region of the Oil Sands, and the labour-sending region of Industrial Cape Breton. The first section examines the historical contexts in which Industrial Cape Breton and the Oil Sands region came to be formed, exploring the connections between and beyond the two. Chapter Two examines how particular landscapes came to be formed in which certain relations are permitted while others disallowed from the realms of possibility. Functions of power and

hegemonic processes come to be embedded in particular geographies of accumulation through the formation of spaces of capital (Harvey 2001) while Chapter Three analyses experiences of migration within such processes through the work-life narratives of George.

Meanwhile, the two regions of Industrial Cape Breton and the Oil Sands region have only recently come to be connected through labour migration and these connections begin to be identified in Section Two. Chapter Four explores the mechanisms which allow such relations to emerge and persist within the Oil Sands industry. The establishment of differing forms of worker control is a theme running throughout the dissertation, with Chapter Five looking squarely at the development of the work-camp system and the parallels and differences to the idea of the company town through the experiences of Ann.

Section Three shifts the attention back to the region of Industrial Cape Breton with Chapter Six examining the region's emergence as a holder of reserve labour. Questions of home and the impacts of migration informed central aspects of this project and while such themes run throughout the dissertation, Chapter Seven in particular examines when notions of home imagined in the "away" collide with the realities of home in the case of return migration.

As a major thematic running throughout the dissertation, I examine the formation of neoliberal classed subjectivities in a period in which relations to work are hardly secure. I examine how individuals enter into practices in which their participation entails necessary collusion in the production and reproduction of power relations. Capital may

require certain idealized worker subjectivities yet workers are not infinitely malleable *vis-à-vis* such hegemonic processes. It is in the space of this resistance, recognition or reaction that new subjectivities come to be created which can ultimately lead to the continuation of production (or not) and this is an issue I return to in the Conclusion. Finally, on a personal note, my time in the field allowed me to turn (or forced me to confront, as it sometimes felt) the work-life narrative upon myself and explore how my own past experiences of work had melded with my own theoretical and ethnographic interests to shape the project at hand. The epilogue, then, examines my own experiences of work, and of growing up in a deindustrializing town, and my work experiences as a young adult to detail how I arrived at my own particular perspectives on Fordism, neoliberalism, deindustrialization, migration and classed subjectivities.

Section 1

The Political Economy of Resource Extraction Industries in Canada

Chapter 2

Mining the Past: Oil, Coal and Historical Connections

> Our civilization...is founded on coal, more completely than one realizes until one stops to think about it. The machines that keep us alive and the machines that make machines, are all directly or indirectly dependent upon coal. In the metabolism of the Western world the coal miner is second in importance only to the man who ploughs the soil. He is a sort of caryatid upon whose shoulders nearly everything that is not grimy is supported (Orwell 1957:26).

> All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed not only at home but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations... (Marx 2003:4 [1848])

Creating Spaces of Capital

At the base of production, political economists remind us, is labour power. Yet more generally, the foundational basis for production can be seen as the energy required for such production. Fuel, as a material containing potential energy, acts as a commodity situated within particular processes of capital and yet also as a fundamental factor for further processes of production. The acquisition of fuel, especially whichever fuel source

exists as a dominant source of energy at a particular point of time, is thus inherently interwoven within complex processes of power while also being inherently political. Fuel branches into the combined and overlapping interests of the nation and private enterprise in terms of the needs for secure, constant and reliable sources of energy for the productive capacities of capital. Yet, the acquisition of fuel, this transformation of nature into potential energy, requires unique combinations of environmental factors, labour and capital. In the Canadian realm, with an economy historically based on the staples of resource extraction (Innis 1970), combining these three aspects together has been contested, has collaborated, and served to link distant regions to one another and to interconnect such regions in global processes in often unanticipated ways.

A necessity of capital is to create environments, physical landscapes and "configurations of space" that are efficient for capital in terms of such circulation, production, exchange and consumption (Harvey 2001: 81). Harvey develops the concept of "spaces of capital" to refer to the particular geographies of accumulation and the work that private interests undertake in order to create particular environments into a specific forms of place in which productive activity occurs. These spaces of capital acknowledge capital's ability (and central necessity) to create and exert control over particular geographical spaces. In terms of the Canadian setting, this is a key acknowledgment, given that many rural areas have been created and shaped as key sites of production of resources and manufactured goods (Lucas 1971; Russell 1999; Winson and Leach 2008) while much work, often contested and negotiated, goes into ensuring that the "right" amounts of capital are invested in the "right" places at the "right" times.

The global transition from coal to oil in the twentieth century provides one such domain in which these processes play out. The typical story of this transition uses tropes of progress in which scientific innovation made coal an obsolete fossil fuel to be replaced by the cleaner burning, more energy dense hydrocarbons of oil (Rose 2004; Tupper 1978). The creative-destructive forces of capital result in steam engines giving way to petroleum-fueled internal combustion engines with rail coming to be superseded by the automobile. Oil comes to be a dominant resource through a commonsensical technological teleology (*cf.* Freese 2003; Yeomans 2004; Yergin 1993).

This narrative is equally applicable to the case of Industrial Cape Breton in eastern Nova Scotia and the Athabasca Oil Sands of northern Alberta and serves as an explanation for the dynamics of migration which now link the two distant regions. As the narrative goes, Industrial Cape Breton with an economy based primarily around coal mining and secondarily around steel-milling, once provided the base materials and fuel to power the growth of the nascent industrializing state of Canada in the early-to-mid twentieth century (Frank 1999; Hornsby 1989; Tupper 1978). Yet, as technologies developed and markets shifted, the centrality of coal diminished while the global role of oil increased, leaving Industrial Cape Breton facing persistent economic decline (Morgan 2009). Meanwhile, technological developments, market forces and the global thirst for oil allowed the geological oddity that is the oil sands to develop into a mega-industry at the dawn of the 21st century (Carrigy 1986; LeRiche 2009; Pratt 1976). Neoclassical economic explanations for migration come to explain the emerging connection of the two regions: Industrial Cape Breton with a surplus of labour power and an absence of

employment, "pushes" workers to where their labour is required. Meanwhile, the oil sands industry, with its labour-intensive operations, "pulls" such workers to this region where their labour power can be effectively put to use (*cf.* Martin 2003; Trager 2005).

Yet this is an imperfect explanation at best, ignoring the specific issues of power and politics, conditions facing such labour and the work that goes into creating and disinvesting from particular spaces of capital while obscuring the interconnected regional and global contexts in which these issues play out. As Thompson notes, capital is often reified and framed to act on its own accord, rather than seen as a process motivated by special interests and particular decision-making processes:

> When we encounter some sonorous phrase such as 'the strong ebb and flow of the trade cycle' we must be put on our guard. For behind this trade cycle there is a structure of social relations, fostering some sorts of expropriation (rent, interest, profit) and outlawing others (theft, feudal dues), legitimizing some types of conflict (competition, armed warfare) and inhibiting others (trade unionism, bread riots, popular political organization) – a structure which may appear, in the eyes of the future, to be both barbarous and ephemeral (1968: 224-5).

Industrial decline and industrial development ought not be taken as a naturalized phenomenon dictated by the seemingly climatic cycles of the global market but rather seen as the consequences of particular decision-making processes, negotiations and contestations. Attention to the details of the formation of particular spaces of capital may allow the human labour at the foundation of these processes to be recognized.

By the same token, although capital has enormous power, capital is not all-powerful (Rothstein 2010). Despite the capacity of capital to be mobile, capital still requires fixed and stable spatial infrastructures, possessing mobility with conditions (Harvey 2001: 331). In terms of fuel production, the extraction of fossil fuel is inherently

by the geological situated-ness of such resources based in a particular place. With economies based on resource extraction, the extraction of coal and oil in both Industrial Cape Breton and Oil Sands are by necessity situated within particular place with such industry severely curtailed in its ability to relocate.

At the same time, resource extraction industries tend to be extremely capital-intensive processes entailing significant time and financial investments in technology and infrastructure. Marx has noted "fixed capital" as immovable or invested in particular space, where "the value is imprisoned within a specific use value" (1973:728). An enterprise based on resource extraction inherently comes up against the "rigidities" associated with being based in a specific place and the need to combat these rigidities with flexibility in other areas of the organization of production which becomes further complicated when melded with the competing and collaborating interests of capital and state (Harvey 2010).

As a way to approach the interwoven histories of Industrial Cape Breton and the Oil Sands and these regions' interconnections with a wider global economy, I have chosen to frame this history as one of transitions in the operation of processes of capital, an incomplete and ongoing shift from Fordism to neoliberalism. Underlining this transition offers an alternative explanation as to how the Oil Sands has come to occupy a central role in the Canadian economy and an important role in North American energy markets. This history additionally traces the interconnected processes through which Industrial Cape Breton has faded into an economically marginalized region on the far eastern periphery of Canada, its residents made redundant and displaced from industrial

relations of production (Sider 2006; Winson and Leach 2008) with the blame for such redundancy placed upon the individuals of the region themselves who now form one of many reserve armies of industrial labour partaking in transcontinental migration to provide the labour power for Oil Sands industry of distant Northern Alberta.

Transitions from Fordism to Neoliberalism

Broadly speaking, Fordism initially refers to a set of labour control practices and configurations of power. Principally it is a particular form of organization of the labour process in which industrial production strategies incorporate elements of scientific management assembly lines and mass production techniques (Burawoy 1979; Harvey 2001; Martin 1994). Yet, following from Gramsci (1971), Fordism also operates as an umbrella term to refer to the wider system of social organization extending from these modes of production and from beyond the labour process, supporting ideas and ideals of stable, unionized blue-collar labour, the family wage and male breadwinner status and expectations of certain stable material compensations for industrial labour. It represented "the biggest collective effort to date to create with unprecedented speed and with a consciousness of purpose unmatched in history, a new type of worker and a new type of man" (Gramsci 1971:302). Fordism came to embody a particular cultural order and a specific culture of employment which came to shape the society from which it emerged while forming myriad supporting practices which constitute the political apparatuses of production and profoundly shaping life beyond the labour process (Burawoy 1985).Taken-for-granted areas of material and social life such as the origins of the

traditional nuclear family, urban planning leading to the popularity of the suburbs, the conceptions of the single family home and the establishment of the "American dream" can all be seen as emanating from the social organization of Fordism (Uhlmann 2006; *cf.* Dagenais 2008).

Fordism emerged through three interrelated systems of thought, policy and practice which came to form the foundations upon which this system of production and system of social organization was supported: Taylorism in the workplace, Wagnerism in the sphere of industrial relations and Keynesianism in the labour market (Russell 1999:14-16). Taylorism refers to the principles of scientific management in the workplace and the separation of conception and execution as described most succinctly by Braverman (1974). Wagnerism refers to the American national labour codes which govern industrial labour authored by Robert Wagner in 1935 in the United States as the National Labour Relations Act that were largely emulated by Canada by 1944 (Russell 1999:15). These laws defined defining the relationship between employers, unions and the state in terms of industrial relations—Wagnerism as such refers to the political apparatuses of production that consist of established ordered and respected rules in the field of industrial relations. Finally, Keynesianism encompasses the social, economic and labour market policies to support the maintenance of income and employment in national and global economies, more broadly known as the welfare state (Brooks and Miljan 2003; Harvey 1990 and 2005; Russell 1999).

Fordist systems of production consisted of locking in large investments of capital in specific locations for long periods of time before profits could be recuperated such as

large-scale factories and manufacturing plants. Such commitments to particular place required (and conversely, offered) stability that states strove to provide through various fiscal and monetary policies and regulations, public investment in infrastructures, expenditures in health care and education and other instances of state intervention. While Fordism in its archetypal form was particularly an American phenomenon, this system with considerable allowances for variety developed through North America, Western Europe, Japan and other parts of Asia and the world (Harvey 1990, 2009; Ong 1991, 2006).

Fordism is often said to be embedded in a particular time and place. The period from post-war 1945 to roughly 1973 commonly held as the blurry bookends between which Fordism operated as a prominent form of societal organization in the United States (Harvey 1990; Ortiz 2002; Ong 1991; Russell 1999), spreading to Canada and beyond in slightly different alterations during this period. Fordism "arrived" in fits and jolts, taking nearly a half century to become a central work organization pattern and was by no means inevitable with Taylorism and mass production strategies successfully (and unsuccessfully) resisted against in many regions (Braverman 1974; Burowoy 1985; Ong 1991). As applied in the American (and by proxy Canadian) state Fordism rested on a "tense yet firm" (Harvey 1990: 133) balance in which corporations limited themselves in certain respects to ensure smooth labour relations and ongoing profitability, unions took on new roles in respects to the production process and labour markets, and the state had to take on new institutional powers and welfare policies – a balance achieved not

smoothly nor by accident but through resistance, struggle and compromise (Harvey 1990: 132-134).

Yet, Fordism is mainly associated with the fields of manufacturing and seen as primarily a way of life emanating from the factory floor (*cf.* Burwoy 1979, 1985; Dunk 1991). Yet the definitional foundations of Fordism emerge from roots in pre-Fordist resource extraction. The industrial revolutions taking place and the manufacturing firms and factories operating in the eighteenth, nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century depended fundamentally on coal as the main source of energy to supply the materials and the driving force for these industries, either in the form of a combustible fuel source used to power machines through steam and later electricity or as a central component in the production of steel, the foundational material of the industrial revolution and of the manufacturing industries which followed. Despite or perhaps more precisely because of its centrality to economic systems, coal mining was (and continues to be in many parts of the world), an exceptionally exploitative set of practices in which coal miners found themselves extremely vulnerable to the interests of capital (Frank 1999; Mitchell 2011).

The economic foundation of this pre-Fordist system was coal. The entire system relied on the labour of the coal miner and his ability to extract this resource from the bowels of the earth. Historically, Industrial Cape Breton, a small region bordering the eastern coast of Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, became connected in pivotal contestations leading to the development of Fordist regimes in the North American

context through its history of being created as a space of capital dedicated to a particular form of coal mining.

In comparison to the colonial histories of other areas of North America, Cape Breton Island, located on the eastern tip of the province of Nova Scotia and jutting out into the North Atlantic Ocean, was relatively slow to be populated and economically developed by European powers. The island had been long populated by Mi'kmaq First Nations who had established networks of villages and trade in the island's interior along the banks of the Bras d'Or Lakes. By the mid 1700s, France had laid claim to the island and established a considerable military presence in the eastern end of Cape Breton in order to protect its interests in the lucrative North Atlantic cod fishery. The British routing of this military force and the subsequent expulsion of French fishermen and settlers dealt a huge blow to France's economy and gave Britain a considerable foothold in assuming control of the eastern seaboard of North America and the Dominion of Canada (Morgan 2009; Tupper 1978).

Under British rule, Cape Breton remained sparsely populated by handfuls of Irish immigrants. It mainly came to be populated in the first half of the nineteenth century by an estimated 50,000 impoverished Scots, many of them victims of the brutal Highland Clearances in which crofters were forcibly displaced and expelled by landlords busily reclaiming lands for less labour intensive sheep farming (Barber 1990; Morgan 2009). Until the twentieth century, this Cape Breton population remained primarily rural with economic and subsistence activities based on farming and fisheries with a handful of fishery and ship-building hamlets emerging, few with populations exceeding five

hundred. During hard times (such as a mid nineteenth century famine), out-migration and circular migration to provide construction labour to the developing urban centres of New England began (Morgan 2009; Tupper 1978).

Nascent rudimentary coal mines began to operate and attract members of the rural population to the coal fields surrounding Sydney Harbour on the eastern coast of the island. Yet this industry was strongly discouraged and depressed by British colonial forces in order to prevent threats to Britain's monopoly on supplying coal to New England and the Dominion of Canada (Morgan 2009).

By the end of the nineteenth century, Canada had emerged as a young state with ambitions to assert itself as an industrialized and independent nation. This entailed fostering a domestic economy, ending interior Canada's reliance on imports from the United States and Britain, and creating the infrastructure representative of a "modern" nation. This particularly meant freeing itself from imports of the key ingredients needed for industrial development: coal and steel. Eastern Cape Breton, in particular the region of Sydney Harbour with its large coal seams, proximity to the sea and St. Lawrence shipping lanes leading to central Canada, closeness to Newfoundland's rich supply of mined iron ore, and large, relatively impoverished pools of available labour, was marked by the Canadian state to supply the base materials of steel and coal to fuel Canada's industrialization (Frank 1999; Gibbs and Leech 2009).

Although Canadian state actors formulated the original idea of developing the region into an industrial site, the state chose to take a secondary role and instead collaborated with capitalist interests so that private enterprise would lead this

development. In the 1890s, the Canadian state succeeded in attracting and fostering capitalist development in the Sydney Harbour region by offering massive grants to Bostonian industrialist Henry Whitney, including a number of subsidies, exemption from taxes, hundreds of acres of free waterfront land and a ninety-nine year right to most of the coal of Cape Breton in return for industrializing and expanding the pre-existing small-scale coal mining industry and establishing a steel production facility (Morgan 2009; Gibbs and Leech 2009). In the ensuing construction of these industries and creation of this particular space of capital, the region quickly acquired the name of Industrial Cape Breton.

Whitney's establishment of the interrelated companies of Dominion Iron and Steel Company and Dominion Coal Company began several traditions in the area: an economy firmly entrenched in industrialized resource exploitation; resources owned and relations of production controlled by unseen and absentee corporate actors; and a local population consisting almost entirely of a labouring proletariat (Frank 1999; Gibbs and Leech 2009). Whitney sold his shares in both companies after only three years of ownership, beginning another industrial tradition in the area. From then on, Cape Breton industry would be controlled by an ever-changing consortium of unseen corporate and state investors such as the British Empire Steel and Coal Company (BESCO), the Dominion Steel and Coal Company (DOSCO) and the Cape Breton Development Corporation (DEVCO) (Morgan 2009).

During this period, the construction and establishment of the steel mill and surrounding mines instigated a significant population boom in the region of Industrial

Cape Breton. Many Scottish settlers from rural Cape Breton Island and the children of such settlers relocated for work in the mines and mill while the area became a relative multicultural tapestry of the impoverished and desperate, attracting immigrants from Ireland, Scotland, Poland, Italy and a large Black population from the northern United States. The small port town of Sydney grew from a population of around 2500 in 1891 to 18,000 by 1911, while the surrounding area became populated as a series of coal mining company towns with the company housing and company stores held by the shifting consortiums which held ownership of the local industries (Barber 1990; Morgan 2009; Gibbs and Leach 2009).

Conditions of considerable misery characterized work in Industrial Cape Breton during the first three decades of the twentieth century with eleven to thirteen-hour workdays, seven-day weeks and for exploitatively low wages being common-place while various repressive private and state forces served to prevent attempts at worker organization (Frank 1999; Morgan 2009; Gibbs and Leech 2009). Meanwhile, perpetual indebtedness to the company stores kept workers in intergenerational cycles of poverty and servitude to the mines and mills (Barber 1990, 2002b; Morgan 2009).

The first three decades of twentieth century liberal capitalism in Cape Breton, while punctuated with such inhuman working conditions felt by miners, steel workers and their families, were also equally interspersed with uprisings by increasingly organized and militant workers' movements. These instances of unrest underscored not only workers' recognition and attempts to improve their brutal living and working conditions but also the combined interests of capital and the state and their capacity to quickly and

efficiently collaborate to maintain these interests, often with violent results. Two brief examples will suffice: in June 1923, steel-mill workers staged a walk-out to fight for the right for an eight-hour work-day. Within days of the strike, the provincial government had deployed police and 1500 soldiers to the area, eventually leading to an organised attack on strikers and their families returning home from a church service. Despite the failure of the coercive attempts to break the strike and the violence of Bloody Sunday, BESCO refused any negotiation and, a month into the strike, threatened to evict strikers from company housing. Workers, even further impoverished and facing homelessness, returned to work (Morgan 2009; Gibbs and Leech 2009; Barber 1990).

In the second example, workers found themselves not fighting to obtain rights but to hold on to what little rights they had. In 1925, miners staged a strike to protest BESCO's announcement to cut their pay by ten percent. BESCO used particularly draconian measures to quell strikers, cutting off electricity and water to the community in which the strikers lived. In a particularly violent instance, company police fired into a crowd of strikers, killing miner Bill Davis and initiating a massive uprising in which company stores were looted and burned to the ground. Federal and provincial police and militia were quickly dispatched to the area to control strikers and to protect BESCO infrastructure (Morgan 2009; Gibbs and Leach 2009; Barber 2002b). Strikers eventually returned to work once the federal government agreed to launch a Royal Commission to investigate whether BESCO had grounds to reduce their wages.

Through the Royal Commission on the Coal Mining Industry in Nova Scotia, the Federal Government made no qualms about identifying whose interests they supported.

The importance given to ensuring that coal and steel continued to flow westward from Industrial Cape Breton and the disregard for the plights of the labourers was reflected in the decision to allow BESCO to continue with its pay decrease, with the final ruling stating:

> The operators run the mines to make profit, the miners dig coal to make a living and these two ends just won't jibe under present conditions. The miners want a living, the operators want profits. Which of these two "wants" should receive the prime and first consideration? The commission, this unprejudiced commission, has left no doubt on that question. Profits come first and these must be maintained even if the present low standard of living of the coal miners has to be reduced still further (Royal Commission Report 1925, *quoted from* Frank 1999: 431).

This antagonistic history continues to ripple into the present. A widespread recognition of a shared class identity in the face of collaborating arrangements between state and capital and has become an important and celebrated aspect of local history and identity (Morgan 2009; Barber 1990, 2002b; Gibbs and Leach 2009). Such themes explicitly come to the forefront in the case of Davis Day, an annual day of remembrance to commemorate the death of Bill Davis and to appreciate the suffering and struggles of miners and millworkers but also more subtly as a recognition of particular shared senses of class and a recognition of the antagonism between worker and capital and an astute awareness of the potential for unequivocal collaboration between capital and state.

And yet, despite, or more likely because, of these brutal conditions of production, Industrial Cape Breton during this period came to produce half of Canada's coal and nearly half of Canada's steel production (Frank 1999; Morgan 2009). The Canadian state became a modern nation with the steel for railways, bridges, trains and ships and coal for steam and electricity supplied by a brutalized and exploited workforce on the periphery of

the young industrializing nation, with the land and its people "considered no more than a cheap source of raw materials and labour" (Macleod 1991:4).

The exploitation of coal miners in Industrial Cape Breton was far from abnormal and paralleled the situations of coal miners in other areas, from the Pennsylvanian mines to the coal fields of England (Laslett 1996; Mitchell 2011). Yet, despite their plight, coal miners held a particular position within these national and burgeoning global organizations of production and trade, being the labour force that supplied the raw power fueling this system. As such, this system, based on a relatively small handful of coal mines with each mine containing hundreds of workers in which a single rail brought this resource to the surface through a single shaft, was incredibly vulnerable to the power of collective labour. Systems so reliant on energy flowing through a very small number of infrastructural choke-points become exceptionally exposed to the impacts of a work stoppage or slow down, particularly so when such blockages are able to bring an entire organization of production, reliant on this source of fuel, to a halt. Once miners were able to use this collective power and exercise these abilities in class conscious ways, such workers were able to make effective change through organization, general strikes and forcing capital into bargaining with labour (Frank 1999; Laslett 1996). The early twentieth century increasingly saw coal miners in the Western world organizing and winning labour rights with the roots of modern democracy and basic labour rights emerging from the interruption of coal supplies (Mitchell 2011). In short, Fordism as a societal form incorporating elements of Wagnerism and Keynesian is strongly derived from coal mining and its burgeoning labour movements.

As a result, local labour struggles combined with the broad acceptance of the Fordist compact allowed coal miners and steel mill workers to obtain fairer salaries and working conditions, while an increase in manufacturing in central Canada prompted booms in the local Industrial Cape Breton coal mining and steel-milling industries. By 1943, Industrial Cape Breton was producing nearly half of Canada's steel, with the local steel industry employing some 5000 people (Morgan 2009:127). Coal mining while still exploitative (with labour actions continuing throughout the first half of the twentieth century such as a major strike in 1947), still provided the region's economic back-bone and main source of employment. The post-World War II period saw a brief period approaching economic prosperity in Industrial Cape Breton and the beginnings of a societal organization underpinned by notions of Fordism.

And yet, Fordism as a societal and cultural form is seen as ending with coal mining as well. It is worthwhile to note that the symbolic and ideological victory of neoliberalism over Fordism was particularly underscored by the defeat of organised labour in the 1984-85 British coal miners' strike, in which coal miners became the "enemy within" as the Thatcher government politically disemboweled the National Union of Mineworkers (Harvey 2005).

A majority of theorists place the major period of transition from Fordism to neoliberalism in the early-to-mid 1970s, emerging from the events surrounding the breakdown of the Bretton Woods accord, financial difficulties in the global banking sector, and the "oil price shock" resulting from OPEC-members' oil embargo (Albo 2009; Blim 2000; Haiven 2009; Sennett 2006). This period saw the introduction of loose

monetary policies, a world-wide property market crash (Harvey 2005) and the global rise of the price of oil (Rose 2004), leading corporations and governments to embark on policies, practices and programs aimed towards economic restructuring and social/political readjustment (Pupo and Thomas 2009), new ways to discipline labour (Mollona 2005) and ways to encourage re-investment of capital, often in the so-called third world (Ong 1991, 2006, 2007).

Yet for Harvey, neoliberalism is seen primarily as an attempt by capital to remove power from labour and return power to capital; it is a fundamentally class-based project aimed at restoring such class power with the aims, goals and practices part of a much broader history of the ongoing processes of capitalist accumulation (2005, 2010). Well before the 1970s with the power of coal miners coming to the forefront, petroleum emerged onto energy markets as a way to ensure that the gains of labour would be temporary and that the policies and practices which would be eventually known as neoliberalism would become hegemonic discourse and hegemonic process. Oil superseded coal as a principal energy source not simply as one commodity replacing another but rather as a method of avoiding making concessions to organized labour (Mitchell 2011; Rose 2004). The post-World War II period leading up to the 1970s saw the opening of international markets, the dropping of tariffs and the slow abandonment of ideas of national economies for international markets (Harvey 1990, Pratt 1976) while the United States and Western Europe, in conjunction with drafting the Marshall Plan, discussed the subsidizing of imported Middle East oil to weaken coal miners' labour power at the time (Mitchell 2011). In the Canadian context, the lifting of trade tariffs

allowed central Canadian manufacturing industries access to cheaper coal from Pennsylvania while the introduction of oil as a central fuel source came to erode the centrality of Industrial Cape Breton in the Canadian national economy (Gibbs and Leech 2009; Tupper 1978). The seeds of neoliberalism were sown at the same time as the policies leading to the acceptance of Fordism began.

The transition from coal to oil was a slow process. In the early part of twentieth century, coal accounted for some 75 per cent of total global energy consumption while even by 1950, oil made up less than a third of global energy production (Sivard 1979: 7). Yet within two decades, by 1970, oil had outpaced coal as a principal commercial energy source, being seen as more efficient, producing less by-products when burned and moreover cheaper (Rose 2004; Sivard 1979). These cost savings were by and large due to oil production being free from the increased costs associated with organised labour (Mitchell 2011; Rose 2004; Tupper 1978). Neoliberalism, Harvey reminds us, is fundamentally a project to eliminate or circumvent the rigidities of the Fordist era and instead replace or redesign such rigidities as flexibilities (2010). In this case, oil, by nature and by design, serves as the energy source *par excellence* in the neoliberal era. Coal, in its solid fossilized state, requires abundant labour power to move it from subterranean seams to rail and ship to be transported to its eventual destination while its extraction and transportation can only be mechanized to a certain degree. On the other hand, crude oil, in its viscidity, tapped from underground wells via mechanical pumps and pressure-driven through pipe-lines across blurred national boundaries, becomes a global commodity relatively free from the rigidities applied to coal; oil apparently

achieves the untrammeled fluidity of international flows of trade and finance desired in a neoliberal era. Oil came to gain a status as a principal energy source through various interconnected processes. The internal combustion engine was popularized by the presence of oil as a cheap source of fuel while cheap oil fuelled industrialization in the Global North, allowing for the economic growth that led to the development of a prosperous American and Canadian middle class and the connected widespread adoption of the automobile and suburban life-styles which, in turn, came to be founded on and reliant upon the premise of cheap oil (Mitchell 201; Rose 2004), creating the material aspects of the Fordist middle-class lifestyle through the same logics which would serve to undermine it.

There was little market impetus to develop the Alberta Athabasca oil sands for much of the twentieth century (Maugh 1978). The vast area, soaked with a thick variant of petroleum known as bitumen, had been a long-known fact, having been noted by European explorers centuries earlier who observed how the local Cree used the tar-like substance to waterproof their canoes. This bitumen-soaked soil lying under the muskeg of the Canadian north was officially noted and recorded by Canadian governmental researchers during Canada's National Resources Inventory of the late nineteenth century and yet was seen as more a geological oddity than a natural resource and hardly a commercial mega-project in waiting (LeRiche 2006; Pratt 1976).

And so, in the first half of the twentieth century while Industrial Cape Breton was busily providing the steel and coal to fuel Canadian industrialization, it was a much different and more tranquil scene some five thousand kilometres away in the northern

reaches of the province of Alberta. In the early 1900s, the hamlet of McMurray, situated in the region of the tar sands[43] along the banks of the Athabasca River, existed as the remnants of a small trading post established by the Hudson Bay Company as part of its fur trading networks within the McKenzie River Basin system. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the post had been all but abandoned, having a brief resurgence as a minor river transport hub during the Klondike gold rush of the early twentieth century. A small community remained of fewer than a few hundred with a local economy based on lumber, river transport with a small fish packing facility located on the banks of the Athabasca (Alberta 1980; LeRiche 2009, Pratt 1976).

By 1920, both provincial and federal researchers were carrying out relatively modest projects exploring the potential of commercializing Northern Albertan bitumen reserves with the main commercial application imagined being a material for road construction (LeRiche 2009). Although some pilot projects were initiated in which several roads in Edmonton and Ottawa were paved using tar sands materials, transportation of bituminous sands from northern Alberta proved impractical and cost prohibitive. Yet, the affiliated research did develop rudimentary techniques of hot water separation to isolate the bitumen from the clay and sand in which it was contained, an innovation which would lead to more refined methods of extraction used today and which opened the possibility of considering bitumen as an alternative to conventional crude oil.

Investments in the oil sands remained low while cheap global oil and the presence of ample conventional oil in Alberta's south made the idea of developing oil sands

[43] At this point, the sands were known exclusively as the tar sands. The use of the term "oil sands" would not occur until bitumen was recognized as a potential fuel source.

untenable to private industry (Ritchie 1980). Yet the Alberta government, having seen the potential of its nascent conventional oil industry further south, began to take a more active role in promoting development in the resource sector and in economic growth more broadly in the province, apparently accepting that the onus would be primarily on the public sector to develop commercial interests in the tar sands (LeRiche 2009, Marsden 2007). By the early 1940s, the provincial government entered into a partnership with private business to build an experimental facility aimed at proving the viability of the tar sands as a commercial endeavour able to produce bitumen for the purposes of fuel production, while the Federal government also collaborated with other private interests to build a second experimental plant in the region. Both plants further refined the hot water separation process and the transforming of the resulting bitumen into a form of synthetic crude oil.

It was also at this point in government documentation that the "rebranding" of the tar sands begins. While until this point, this region and the material contained within was known as the tar sands (linking the idea that the resource be used as paving material), government documents also begin to occasionally and alternatively use the term "the oil sands", referring to bitumen's capacity to be transformed into an energy source (*cf.* Carrigy 1989; Maugh 1978).

The provincial government concluded their experiment in the oil sands in the late 1940s, with researchers having refined the technology of hot water extraction to the point where it was argued that the sands could be commercialized and made profitable. Yet this innovation was overshadowed by the discovery of a massive oil field in Leduc, Alberta in

1947. The Leduc discovery led to a sustained economic boom, and Alberta become situated in the Canadian and North American energy markets as an a oil-producing powerhouse. This led the province to lose interest in developing the northern region, concluding that oil sands development would be unlikely given the presence of nearby abundant and cheaply exploitable conventional oil reserves (LeRiche 2006; Pratt 1976).

From 1945 until the early 1970s, global oil prices remained stable and exceptionally low in comparison to contemporary prices while the United States, with abundant supplies of oil, was able to create vast industrial and manufacturing sectors. In this post-World War II period, the United States, with immense domestic oil reserves, was central in the development of oil-based technologies in the fields of automotives, manufacturing and petrochemicals with oil becoming the foundation for industry, agriculture and transportation. However, beginning in 1960, the global politics of oil were slowly changing. Several major oil producing states finally reached a point of frustration in regards to the management of their national resources by multinational oil-producing corporations. Leading up to that point, world oil production was dominated by the "Seven Sisters" multinational corporations (Anglo-Persian Oil Company, Gulf Oil, Standard Oil of California, Texaco, Royal Dutch Shell, Standard Oil of New Jersey and Standard Oil Company of New York) who controlled 85 per cent of the world's oil production. Many exporting states began to articulate that these major oil companies were essentially an extension of colonial relations, extracting resources from these countries while giving little back in return. In 1960, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran and Iraq created the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in order to increase national

control of natural resources, improve their bargaining power *vis-à-vis* major global oil companies, and to better represent their collective interests (Rose 2004). Yet, at its onset, OPEC actually had little ability to influence global pricing during the 1960s; by 1970, crude oil was still relatively cheap at $1.35 US a barrel as the ratio of global production to consumption was still quite high (Pratt 1976; Rose 2004).

And yet, during the gradual transition from coal to oil, the situation of coal extraction had provided private interests a lesson in the dangers of relying on limited place-situated points to fuel an entire organization of production. Such fears became further galvanized by the formation of OPEC and oil consortiums began concentrated efforts to diversify oil production sources (Pratt 1976). Meanwhile, in approaching the status of a principal energy source like its predecessor coal, oil came to be intimately tied with politics and national issues of energy security. While the economics of development had beforehand made the business model of the oil sands untenable, events of the 1960s and 1970s shifted the ways in which oil was viewed as a commodity and as an element of national security. Two oil consortiums, Great Canadian Oil Sands Limited (CGOS, later renamed Suncor) and Cities Service (later renamed Syncrude), applied for permission to begin developing oil sands extraction plants slightly north of McMurray in 1962, although the latter's application was delayed for several years as a result of initial governmental fears of developing the sands too rapidly (Alberta 1980). Up to the 1960s and early 1970s, the oil sands were seen by principal state actors as a provincial resource that would act as an energy insurance policy for the eventual time when Alberta's substantial conventional oil supply would become exhausted, a line of thinking that was

far from unanimously held during a time when the world was awash in cheap oil (Brandie *et al* 1982; Carrigy 1986; Ritchie 1980). In fact, in the 1960s, the main challenge facing Albertan and global conventional oil producers was one of over-production and the difficulty of finding markets and buyers (Pratt 1976). Regardless, the CGOS plant was constructed through the 1960s and put into operation in 1967 (Alberta 1980).

Shortly thereafter, in response to the "stagflation" of the 1970s, various states adopted a variety of economic policies to allow for less regulated market access for business (Ong 2006, 2007). These actions saw the elimination of various barriers to trade, investment and the allowance for various acts to discipline local work forces in the process (Harvey 2005). A particularly relevant aspect of this set of processes was the United States' abandonment of the gold standard in August 1971 and the adoption of an flexible exchange rates. Anticipating fluctuations of currencies, the United States printed additional money and increased their monetary reserves. The direct impact of this action was a sudden devaluation of the US dollar in international markets (Harvey 2005). At the same point, 1972 was the first year in which United States consumption of oil outweighed its production and it became a net importer of oil (Rose 2004).

Until that point, oil had been internationally valued in US dollars. The end of the gold standard meant that the amount that oil producers received for oil in real dollar value suddenly drastically decreased. At this point, OPEC untethered their valuations of oil from the US dollar, stating that oil would be now priced against gold. In 1973-1974, the price of oil became volatile and rose dramatically (Hammes and Wills 2005). OPEC quickly succeeded in manipulating oil production and supply, increasing global prices of

oil from $1.35 US / barrel in 1970 to $5.11 US by 1973 and then again to $35.00 US in 1979. While, from 1947–1967, the price of oil in U.S. dollars had risen by less than 2 per cent per year, between 1970 to 1980, the price increased by 2500 per cent (Rose 2004: 434). The Middle East embargo on oil exports to the United States in 1973 further underlined the Unites State's dependence on imported oil and further bolstered the prices of oil on the global market.

It is in this context that the oil sands became a viable commercial entity and an important element in the North American energy market. In the early 1970s, both the federal and provincial government had desires to see the oil sands developed yet while ideas to develop the oil sands through a crown corporation were raised (Alberta 1974), the Albertan government eventually came to the conclusion that the government lacked the technical expertise, international market connections and ability to provide start-up capital to develop this nascent industry. Instead, similar to the earlier creation of the coal industry in Industrial Cape Breton, the province worked in collaboration with private industry to develop the oil sands into a commercial endeavor (LeRiche 2006; Pratt 1976).

At the same time, in the 1970s, when the oil sands were being developed and oil prices were raising as a result of the 1973 energy crisis, it is important to consider the uncertain role oil played in market and political realms. Oil was seen as a central source of energy, crucial to business and national interests but had not yet acquired its role as the pivotal energy source that it holds in the contemporary era (*cf.* Brandie *et al* 1982; Jenkins 1986; Pratt 1976). Rather, oil consortiums still had to contend with coal and a nascent nuclear energy program as sources of competition while the energy crisis had

created innovative interests in other alternative forms of energy. Oil companies were thus in the delicate position of wanting to keep prices high in order to continue turning large profits but also maintaining oil prices low enough to stymie possible competition to oil's rising hegemonic status. As Harvey (2010) underlines, capital, in creating its own spatial boundaries, locks itself into certain relationships through the creation of such landscapes which, once created, are no longer easily mutable. A consistent fear among developers and investors in developing oil sands production sites was that, given the large investments and long amortization periods before a profit is turned, such investments could be quickly rendered unprofitable failures in the event of a global oil price drop (Helliwell and McRae 1981, 1982; Ritchie 1980), with the possibility that OPEC would attempt to drastically lower international oil prices through increasing production and global oil supplies to quell such competition being an ever-present issue (Pratt 1976).

As such, oil consortiums and national governments entered into cautious dances to develop key natural resources and agree on the terms on which such spaces of capital would be formed (Jenkins 1986). The American energy crisis brought the oil sands to the attention of multiple oil and resource extraction industries interested in partaking in a fast-tracked and large-scale development of the sands. Yet, at the same time such companies also reminded the state of its embeddedness in place as opposed to the mobility exercised by private interests and un-invested capital. While oil consortiums expressed interest in developing the Sands, the Alberta government recognized that such companies were also examining other potential conventional and alternative fossil fuel sources, with the Colorado Oil Shales and Venezuela oil reserves seen as likely

investments (LeRiche 2006; Nikiforuk 2008; Pratt 1976). Capital's mobility placed it in a position to negotiate generous concessions from particular states by placing distant regions in competition for their investment.

In this environment, private interests' initial appearance of reluctance to develop the oil sands industry led to various collaborations with government in which its interests were assured by the state and its risks externalized and downloaded onto the public. Generous royalty regimes, income tax reductions, guarantees of return on investment, government commitments to provide certain infrastructures and a disciplined workforce became the provisions oil sands companies expected from the province, with such companies paying particular attention to drafting the blueprints that would form the guiding principles of how these spaces of capital would come to be created and what form they would take (Harvey 2001; Pratt 1976; *cf.* Alberta Chamber of Resources 1995). The oil sands industries developed in this environment, combining national interests of energy security and private interests of modern industrial capitalism to maximise profits. As Pratt succinctly points out, oil sands development was motivated by "greed laid over fear" (1976:63). Construction of the oil sands industry quickly progressed over the course of the 1970s as Suncor and Syncrude, through multiple concessions made by the governments of Alberta and Canada, began constructing and operating mega-project extraction industries (Alberta 1980).

In the case of earlier resource extraction endeavors such as coal mining in Industrial Cape Breton, companies established themselves in a particular area, constructed a local industry under the assumption of operating perpetually into the future,

and secured a local and stable labour force to allow for this possibility (Lucas 1971; White 2012). This requirement of stability for capital become a key component in the Fordist regime. In return, the concomitant stability of employment allowed workers a modicum of control over his future aspirations and the ability to plan for tomorrow (Sennett 2006; Sider 2006). Yet the use of modern geological techniques combined with neoliberal principles in which workforces are expected and conditioned to be flexible, underlined that the industry was predicted to have a certain life-span, a certain amount of time necessary to extract the oil from the sands with a definitive (but not defined) end-point in the future (*cf.* Lucas 1971). A key change from the Fordist era would be that the Oil Sands would not be seen as an "industry" but rather a "project". As such, the Oil Sands industry was seen as temporary from the beginning—albeit a temporary project estimated to span several generations—with such arguments used to support the need for utilizing increasing numbers of temporary workers to supply labour to such projects (Pratt 1976; *cf.* Storey 2010).

While extraction industries of the past established company towns to house their labour forces, Suncor, Syncrude and subsequent investors in the oil sands refused initial ideas of forming purpose-built communities to house their labour forces despite being located in the sparsely populated northern hinterlands of Alberta. Instead, the two consortiums came to take a dual approach to worker accommodation: downloading the cost of developing worker accommodations onto the public sector and taking a "no-town" approach based around the permanent establishment of large-scale "temporary" worker accommodations (Storey 2010). The town of Fort McMurray was selected as the

principal site to house incoming workers with the costs of developing it downloaded onto the new town and the province of Alberta (Alberta 1980).

With the announcement that Suncor (known as CGOS at the time) would build a plant in the oil sands region and that Fort McMurray would be anticipated as the home community for an incoming workforce, Fort McMurray applied for New Town status in the early 1960s, giving it access to provincial government funds to develop infrastructure (Alberta 1980). Yet Suncor began construction of its plant months before New Town status was officially granted to Fort McMurray, leaving planners in a long-enduring state of emergency and reaction in their attempts to provide accommodation for Suncor labour. Urban planners of the time noted the difficulties in planning and managing a town principally based on providing labour to produce what was at the time the most volatile of world commodities and the challenges of organising the development of housing for the mercurial labour force producing a commodity whose production is tied with speculation. Urban development in Fort McMurray continued in a piecemeal fashion throughout the 1960s and early 1970s with no overarching plan being evident. The new town's young staff was inexperienced and the provincial government was apprehensive about investing in a town that might well become unsustainable should the oil sands industry fail. Suncor did little to help the situation, requiring more labour than originally reported, while as soon as the plant came on line in 1967, reporting that their oil sands operations were losing huge sums of money (Alberta 1980).

By 1972, a general plan for the development of the town had been produced. However, during its writing, Syncrude (known as Cities Services at the time) announced

its plans to build a plant in the oil sands and that thus Fort McMurray would have to drastically and rapidly grow to accommodate the additional incoming workforce (Alberta 1980). As such, the plan was outdated before it was even released and piecemeal development continued. Meanwhile, in the space of four years of rapid development, the Syncrude plant went from being an uncertain possibility to a monstrous industrial complex employing three times more workers than Syndrude originally predicated with a temporary construction workforce of 8000 and a permanent workforce of 3000 (Pratt 1976; Alberta 1980). The town government was placed into "the purely functional aspect of accommodating people" while any type of planning initiatives "over a couple of months was considered long range" (Alberta 1980: 14). Meanwhile, the costs of these developments were placed squarely on the town of Fort McMurray. Neither Syncrude nor Suncor, being located outside town limits, paid any property taxes to the town. The Alberta government provided loans through the New Towns Act which did little to mitigate the expenses associated with "the fact that a town of 10,000...was having to build facilities for a town of 25,000" (Alberta 1980: 13).

In this context there was little resistance from governmental actors to the idea that the oil sands consortiums would provide accommodations for labourers in the form of work-camps. The resource extraction industry had experimented with various "no-town" models in North America beginning in the 1950s with the off-shore oil industry in Gulf of Mexico (Storey 2010) with such "radically spatialized" (Russell 1999) industrial relations departing from the former methods of settling a workforce in the vicinity of an operation for several generations (Lucas 1971; White 2012). This particular approach

gained momentum in the 1970s, as a combination of corporate interests became directed towards lean and flexible production techniques while governments became less willing to support the establishment of single-industry towns in remote areas (Storey 2010). This work-camp system became increasingly complex in the oil sands region. Temporary Atco-style mobile trailer bunk-houses dotting the landscape around industrial sites under construction gave way to more complex institutions such as a 700-person dormitory-style work-camp constructed on the site of the Syncrude plant in the late 1970s (Alberta 1980).

By the end of the 1970s, a huge mega-project in the oil sands was established, on a size and scale not yet seen in industry. Pratt described the spectacle of these operations in the mid-1970s:

> GCOS [*now Syncrude*] looks like it came boiling out of the imagination of some early surrealist painter with a fascination for monstrous earth-moving machines and smoke-belching factories – a celebration of the triumph of technology over wilderness. The very nature of the resource demands gigantism. Forcing the asphalt-like sands to surrender their thick, sticky oil and then transforming that oil to a marketable product is an expensive and appallingly dirty business involving large-scale technology, some borrowed from coal strip mining and oil refining and some invented especially for the tar sands...The scale of the technologies employed, the mountains of materials handled every hour, the size of the mining pit, the sprawling lakes of polluted wastes – these are at once awesome and horrifying. (1976:15-16)

The Deindustrialization and Reindustrialization of Industrial Cape Breton

A stated principal feature of neoliberalism stems from the neoclassical economic ideology that markets should be free from government interference. Yet, the stated policies of neoliberalism often radically diverge from actual practices (Harvey 2005; Ong 2006; Pupo and Thomas 2009). In Northern Alberta, oil corporations and Canadian

federal and provincial governments successfully collaborated to create a particular neoliberalised space of capital, externalising cost and risk to the public whenever feasible in the process. Meanwhile, on the other side of Canada, in the context of the decline of coal and ascendance of oil as a principal global source of energy, the state was called upon to support a coal mining industry founded on the exploitative conditions of early liberal capitalism but which found itself no longer able to function in a Fordist era.

Throughout the 1960s, Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation (DOSCO) routinely requested and received large federal subsidies, arguing that the particularities of Cape Breton coal mining made profit-making difficult during the period in which coal mining slowly transformed from an industry based on exploitative labour to a fairly-paid, unionized job within the Fordist regime. At the same time, the mines employed over 11000 men, literally a quarter of the entire island's male working population, with the federal government seeing the granting of subsidies for the continuation of the coal mines as a social policy to prevent massive unemployment in an economically depressed region rather than as an economic policy to foster particular economic gains (Donald 1966; Tupper 1978). An abundance of cheap Albertan oil and cheaper coal from Pennsylvania to fuel Quebec and Ontario manufacturing factories, along with the conversion of Canadian railways from steam to diesel engines, further caused setbacks for Cape Breton coal (Tupper 1978; Morgan 2009). As coal markets began to decline, as did production and employment in the mines. State interests intentionally played a role in transforming the local workforce into reserve labour for other regions requiring cheap and often temporary labour:

> The general strategy implemented by government specialists and university economists was to close the mines and **allow** [*bold in original*] workers to follow labour market demand. The main beneficiaries of surplus Cape Breton labour were Ontario and Alberta.... Most young people were forced to migrate since jobs were not available (Macleod 1991: 5).

While labour mobility had hardly been uncommon in Industrial Cape Breton and Atlantic Canadian for generations (Hornsby 1989; MacKenzie 2002; Morgan 2009), during this period such out-migrations become far more prevalent and expected ways of life. Workers from Cape Breton began what would be seen as the "tradition" of "goin' down the road" and "goin' away", providing labour for the various boom periods in Alberta, Toronto, Boston and New York, sometimes engaging in forms of circular migration, sometimes making permanent moves marked by hopes to return.

Finally, in the mid 1960s, DOSCO announced its plans to divest itself from the unprofitable mines despite the numerous government subsidies it had received in the past. The Canadian state was faced with the prospect of the politically challenging situation of losing the economic centre of a region and having 11 000 workers suddenly unemployed. A federal report, revealingly entitled "The Cape Breton Coal Problem", proposed ending the subsidies to DOSCO and instead nationalising the mines, using the money that would otherwise be spent on subsidies to diversify the Cape Breton economy to industrial, export-driven activities while ending workers' over-reliance on a single industry:

> The Cape Breton coal problem arises from the dependence of a large section of the Cape Breton population on the employment provided by the mines and the uncompetitive and uneconomic nature of the coal mining industry. (Donald 1966: 32)

The framing of Industrial Cape Breton as "problematic" was a continuation of a particular inclination of external state and development actors to see the region's economic and employment issues as being contained within and originating from the region itself. There is a certain pathologizing of poverty in this explanation in which the individuals who have sought employment in the mines are blamed for their eventual economic reliance on this particular industry. The beginnings of the "culture of dependency" argument in which the people of the region have a long history of depending on a "paternalistic benefactor", at first in the form of the coal company that provided the necessities of life through employment in the mines, company stores and housing provided to workers with this "dependency" then transferred to the federal government once the mines were nationalized, came to be applied to the region (DeRoche 2002).

What these arguments fail to point out, of course, are the global political economic connections in which Cape Breton is a part. The area itself was formed as a particular space of capital with particular organizations of work and interconnected with a globalising market. This particular space of capital was formed around the idea of creating profit using labour power obtained under brutal and exploitative conditions. Once these fields of relations changed and labour obtained certain rights, coal lost its centrality as a commercial energy source. Combined with other elements such as international competition and environmental regulations, this situation resulted in this particular space of capital being no longer profitable and capital flight ensued. In other words, the entire region was created to serve the needs of capital in a particular function

and set of relations and once these relations and function changed, capital abandoned the area. Yet, the blame for the consequences of this arrangement, from a political point of view, was placed on the individuals whose labour was no longer required in the same capacity, rather than the processes of capital which created these sets of circumstances leading to economic restructuring and relocation of capital (*cf.* Barber 1990, 2002b; Gibbs and Leech 2009).

But yet, the ironic situation is that in the mid-1960s, in the same period that the Canadian state was coping with mitigating the social consequences of having allowed one area to develop a "chronic dependence" (Donald 1966:30) on a single resource extraction industry, at the same time the Alberta and federal governments were struggling to likewise create the Oil Sands as a region devoted singularly to resource extraction. Processes paralleling the original historical development of Industrial Cape Breton were occurring in the Oil Sands with capital investment in Western Canada pursued by the same sets of state actors who were also reacting to the consequences of capital flight in Eastern Canada. Yet such comparable processes were not framed as problematic or contradictory.

In 1967, the Cape Breton Development Corporation (DEVCO) was formed as a crown corporation with two divisions with separate yet corresponding aims. One division was to manage and slowly shut down coal mining operations and the other was to function as a community economic development organization. The two divisions were to cooperate to phase-in mine closures while introducing alternative employment for former miners (Tupper 1978). While this nationalization has been argued as an extension and

eventual proof of the failure of Keynesian policies, the creation of DEVCO fit well into neoliberal aims with state intervention allowing private interests to quickly disinvest from this created space of capital and transfer the concomitant social and economic consequences of this disinvestment into the public sphere (Gibbs and Leech 2009). By 1971, DEVCO had succeeded in cutting coal mining employment by nearly half, yet, despite offering handsome subsidies to various business endeavors, was unable to attract any long-lasting employment alternatives to the region (Tupper 1978).

Yet, in light of the 1973 energy crisis, the Canadian government quickly re-examined Canadian energy production, putting in place policies with the somewhat contradictory aims of ensuring both national energy security and the continued free flow of energy supplies over the Canada/US border. The goal was to lessen eastern Canada's dependence on imported oil while American and Canadian state interests collaborated to ensure that Albertan oil flowed across the national borders undisrupted (Pratt 1976).

As global oil prices rose to unprecedented heights, the global prices of coal also made substantial gains as states and industry quickly converted back to coal power. As nationalised Canadian coal became a crucial commodity to allow for the functioning of productive activities and ensuring national energy security, DEVCO rapidly changed its mandate from managing the decline of coal mining in Industrial Cape Breton to quickly and dramatically expanding coal mining in the area once more. Government financing brought new economic development to Industrial Cape Breton, allowing for the construction of new infrastructures, new international shipping piers and new mines throughout the region (Morgan 2009). While the price of coal on the international market

rose from $8 US/tonne in 1967 to $52 US /tonne by 1984 (EIA 2012), global forces had unexpectedly given new life to a once-abandoned space of capital. DEVCO hired a whole new generation of miners while a local working-class population gained hope that the Fordist way of life, which had been in the region so fleetingly, had returned.

Yet at the same time, the levels of employment in the mines never returned to the peak days of coal production following the Second World War. Mechanization and other technological innovations replaced human labour to a large degree and, as such, coal miners in Industrial Cape Breton came to represent an "aristocracy of labour" as a minority of the workforce among a broader population working lesser jobs and facing long stretches of unemployment (Haiven 2009: 198). Overall, the region still remained economically depressed for those excluded from such Fordist relations with unemployment and outmigration in the area commonplace for a population for whom the future economic outlook looked increasingly dim (Morgan 2009: 169-173). Out-migration remained common, with the intial boom period in the oil sands attracting workers while network-mediated migration (Olwig 2007; Wilson 1994) connected workers in Industrial Cape Breton to work in the "away". One worker I interviewed who has been commuting from Industrial Cape Breton to the Sands and other areas where his labour is required for his entire life relates his experiences during this period:

> You couldn't buy a job at the steel mill or the coal mines back then. So me and my buddy quit school together and worked at the fish plant. I took a job on the lake-boats[44] a bit after but he couldn't get on, so he went on out to Fort McMurray for work. Next year, 1976, I thinks [*sic*], I go out to visit... The place

[44] Serving as crew members on "lake-boats", the cargo ships which operate on the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Great Lakes, were and remain a source of temporary and mobile work for many individuals from Cape Breton.

> was just like it is now but there was only Suncor and Syncrude, they were just finishing building Syncrude and they couldn't get enough guys out to work. I went up to visit and went out for a drink with my buddy. And another guy was like, "What are you doing out here, do you want a job?" And that was that. I joined the union and never looked back... I was doing labour, shovelling snow around the camps. It was 40 below, 40-odd below. We were shovelling all the snow off the roofs on the camps, 'cause it was getting that heavy. And that's how I started out.

During the energy crisis of the 1970s, Industrial Cape Breton's coal seemed to be a critical instrument of national survival (Cameron 1999) but this revival proved to be fleeting. Global events of the early 1980s saw oil once again superseding coal as a central energy source and commodity, and economic decline gripped Industrial Cape Breton once more. Over the twentieth century, the fortunes of Industrial Cape Breton and the oil sands seemed to be conversely related but at this point, the same global processes that led to the decline of Industrial Cape Breton also provoked the stalling of the Oil Sands mega-projects.

By the early 1980s, non-OPEC oil production increased drastically (Rose 2004), particularly with the Alaskan Prudhoe Oil Reserve being quickly developed in the context of the 1970s energy crisis (Sweet 2008). OPEC attempted to further influence oil production and market prices in the early 1980s, decreasing production steadily. Yet, its ability to influence world oil prices waned as the majority of Western states' oil consumption now came from non-OPEC sources (Warsh 1982). At the same time, energy markets diversified, as North American electricity generation from nuclear power and natural gas rose while automotive fuel efficiency increased as well (Portney *et al.* 2003).

With declining economic incentives and the neoliberalised structures in place to allow for rapid disinvestment, by the early 1980s construction and production in the Oil

Sands quickly waned. Imperial Oil cancelled a $10 billion dollar project, Shell and Gulf cancelled their oil sands plant and 12 000 oil sands workers lost their jobs (Brandie *et al.* 1982; Jenkins 1986). While corporations used these disinvestments as an opportunity to attack the then- Liberal federal government in power at the time and their purportedly business-unfriendly National Energy Program (Helliwell and McRae 1981), Jenkins (1986) notes that Canadian disinvestment followed ongoing global trends of decreasing investments in oil production as oil prices dropped and supply remained abundant on the world market. The NEP merely provided a convenient pretext for corporate actors to avoid public opprobrium as a result of decisions of divestment.

Lower prices for oil and higher taxes on oil exports effectively limited investment in the sands, still a nascent industry not yet profitable and reliant on governmental support for its continuation. Yet the industry would still stand as an insurance policy for Canadian energy security:

> To us the enigma of the tar sands is that while development today appears uneconomic, it seems certain that we will need the oil from the tar sands tomorrow. We are caught in the typical "Catch-22" dilemma. Given current technology and the implied capital and operation costs, the short-term price outlook and no guarantee of stable if not escalating real prices for tar sands oil, it is unlikely that any further plants will be built. With no such plants in operation, there will be no incentive for industry to continue attempts to develop cost-cutting technologies. Since capital and operating costs of current technologies will doubtless continue to rise, tar sands plants could continue to be uneconomic even if real world oil prices do rise substantially. The optimal use of this vast resource will only occur if there is understanding and agreement between government and industry to reduce the high financial risks and thus encourage private sector development (Brandi *et al* 1982).

Oil was once again a central source of cheap energy, which made further private investment in the sands unlikely. But yet, the conditions of the 1970s had allowed for the

creation of the technologies and infrastructures of the oil sands. Throughout the 1980s, this industry became something of a sleeping giant while the newly constructed massive work-camps surrounding Suncor sat empty.

Meanwhile, in Industrial Cape Breton, DEVCO reverted to its original mandate of phasing out coal mining and finding alternative sources of employment for former miners in particular and the local population in general. One of DEVCO's few "success stories" was the creation of a heavy water plant to provide material for Canada's national nuclear energy program and the concomitant several hundred jobs created by this industry (Morgan 2009). And yet with lower oil prices and a diminished public appetite for nuclear power, Atomic Energy of Canada closed the plant in the mid 1980s. Beyond the material impacts of suddenly placing three hundred individuals out of work, the closing additionally spoke to "the impotence of state policy to reverse the tide of de-industrialization in Cape Breton" (Barber 1990:4), causing people to accept that the Fordist ideal was quickly fading into the past.

Industrial Cape Breton's situation worsened in 1990s and early 2000s with a "perfect economic storm" (Haiven 2009: 200), in which most of the region's primary and secondary industries simultaneously closed. The fisheries collapsed, leaving fishermen and women out of work while the fish-packing plants, once a relatively stable form of employment particularly for female workers (Barber 1990), quickly folded. DEVCO, despite not having succeeded in its mandate to develop alternative sources of labour, slowly closed Industrial Cape Breton's industry with the last of the coal mines and steel mill shutting their doors in 2000-2001. Overall, huge numbers were left unemployed

(Haiven 2009) while government retraining programs subtly conditioned former coal miners to out-migrate by offering training for jobs that simply didn't exist locally.

At present, the region lacks a major industrial employer. Government initiatives have focused on shifting the region from an industrial base to a "knowledge economy" (ECBC 2009), which has as yet resulted in little more than the opening of several call centres in the area providing low-paying, insecure employment for some (Gibbs and Leech 2009). Meanwhile, many residents of Industrial Cape Breton feel that the region has historically been taken advantage of, both by industry and the state, and forced into peripheral relationships where it provides the labour and resources for the development of other areas while not receiving proper recompense in return (Patterson and Biagi 2003:23).

Decline and Rise of the Oil Sands

Suncor and Syncrude continued producing relatively small amounts of synthetic crude oil in the oil sands throughout the 1980s and 1990s, regularly turning small profits but not enough to justify further expansion to potential investors. In a period of a North American recession and high unemployment in Canada, industry saw an opportunity to once again develop the Oil Sands as a particular space of capital. The oil sands consortiums collaborated with government to form the National Oil Sands Task Force, a collective of governmental and oil industry representatives which convened to make a plan to make the oil sands "economically viable" (Alberta Chamber of Resources 2012). The ensuing report, "The Oil Sands: A New Energy Vision for Canada" (Alberta

Chamber of Resources 1995), authored in part by the President and CEO of Syncrude, was an archetypal neoliberal document in which much of the risk of developing and investing in the oil sands was to be publicly underwritten while the potential for profits was to be absorbed by private interests. By 1996, the provincial and Canadian governments agreed to enact key recommendations of this report, putting in place a royalty plan in which oil sands companies pay 1 per cent royalties on total revenue until capital costs are recovered (at which time royalties increase to 25 per cent of total revenue), while the Canadian government offered similarly generous income tax reductions. A principal feature of this plan was to create a strong impetus for continued expansion of operations as royalties continue to be low for as long as business continually re-invests in expansion. This collaboration between state and private enterprise caused a period of massive investment in the oil sands. Shortly after these sets of agreements went into effect, Suncor began its $2.2-billion Millennium expansion in 1997 while Syncrude announced its own $6-billion plan to expand operations (National Post 2008).

While the oil sands began to quickly develop in the late 1990s, the onset of a global commodities boom in the early 2000s dramatically raised the price of oil and sparked further furies of investment in the Oil Sands mega-projects with nearly $100 billion dollars of investment placed into the oil sands during the first decade of the 2000s (Alberta 2012). As new consortiums entered the oil sands market, new plants went on-line and older ones expanded operations. Developers claimed the only element slowing down the process of development was the lack of labour power. The town of Fort McMurray struggled to keep up with the demands of providing housing with a population

increase of 141.2 per cent from 1999 to 2008 as the population exploded from 42 447 to 103 334 in under a decade (WBRM 2008: 5). Meanwhile, the system of work-camps became more sophisticated as accommodations capable of housing several thousand temporary workers were constructed. These "camps" grew into sprawling complexes containing multiple wings of dormitories, cafeterias and leisure space for multitudes of workers, becoming a permanent feature of the landscape while the populations housed within the camp system increased dramatically, from 3568 workers in 1999 to 5903 workers in 2000, to 9178 in 2005 and to 26 284 in 2008 (WBRM 2010).

At present, a large proportion of these workers relocating and becoming involved in migratory "long-distance commutes" (Storey 2009) to work and live temporarily in the oil sands are "displaced" workers (Winson and Leach 2002) made "redundant" (Sider 2006) by processes of capital. Such workers originate from former spaces of capital that have undergone periods of disinvestment, decline and capital flight. Workers from Industrial Cape Breton had, in small numbers, been traveling to and relocating to the oil sands since the 1970s. Network-mediated migration served to connect the two regions as the need for such labour increased in the late 1990s and early 2000s as information about the oil sands and employment opportunities flowed through personal social networks. As the need for labour increased, Albertan and Nova Scotian trades unions collaborated to deliver such labour power westwards. By 2003, the Oil Sands had wholly "discovered" Industrial Cape Breton's latent workforce and began conducting work fairs in the region to attract new workers. Soon afterwards, weekly chartered air flights between Industrial Cape Breton and the private air-strips of particular oil sands projects were put into place.

This circuit of labour migration was reinforced through formalized and informal channels as hundreds from Industrial Cape Breton moved to the Oil Sands while hundreds more began travelling back and forth (Ferguson 2011).

Despite contentions of neoliberalism's commitment to free enterprise and the myth of the declining state in a neoliberalizing era (Pupo and Thomas 2009), capital has had a long history of relying on the state (Ong 2006) and in fact requires a strong state. This remains the case today as evidenced by the above history of collaboration between state and private enterprise in regards to Industrial Cape Breton and the Oil Sands. But yet, the creations of spaces of capital and of continued expansion of production depends on the existence of surplus labour. Ways to "create" such pools must be found: stimulating population growth, creating migrations, drawing on "latent populations" and creating unemployment (Harvey 2001: 238). Fortunately for the needs of capital, harmonious, balanced growth is purely coincidental under capitalism as commodity production is chaotic and spontaneous and subject to "crises" (Harvey 2010). Industrial Cape Breton has come to be an ideal provider of labour to the Oil Sands industry with abundant amounts of reserve labour trained for industrial work and "conditioned" for the harsh realities of this style of work and life, by holding a familiarity with unemployment and underemployment which allows for a "tolerance for instability" (DeRoche 1987: 86) which leads them to be accepting of the precariousness of these work arrangements and even grateful for such employment. And in the process, the connections between the two regions quickly emerge and became entrenched.

Chapter 3

"I had to go Away so that I could Stay": Neoliberalizing Classed Subjectivities and Adapting to Precarious Status

In the time leading up to and following the 2008 economic downturn, work for mobile labourers in the Oil Sands underwent a dramatic change as various construction and expansion projects were cancelled, delayed or scaled down. For many, this loss of employment had not only deleterious financial impacts but also substantial subjective impacts on workers as they came to realize their precarious role within this mobile work arrangement. For George, a mobile worker whose experiences inform this chapter, his experiences of mobile labour in the Oil Sands industry came to be fundamentally an adaption to precarity coloured by an almost nostalgic longing for the stability to be found in a idealized Fordist style work-life.

As Sennett (2006) explains, much of Weber's work on rationalization examined how, fundamentally, early capitalism was rooted in ideas and assumptions of stability, both from the perspectives of owners of capital and from that of workers implicated in such processes. Stability and the need for long-term strategies and profits became an organizing feature of capitalism and civil society, while bureaucratization and ensuing rationalization allowed individuals to construct life-narratives through the institution of work. For the worker, the stability and structuring features found in the world of work allowed for a degree of control over one's self and, perhaps more importantly, over one's

future. One's relation to work allowed for the formation of particular self-identities and allowed one security in entering certain relations and procuring certain material goods. A worker would be able to procure a loan to purchase a house, secure in the knowledge that work in the future allows for repayment of such a loan. Stability provided a logical progression of events over time and a clear sense of order which benefit workers and owners of capital alike: "No matter how poor he may be, the worker who knows he has an established position is less likely to revolt than the worker who can't make any sense of his or her position in society" (Sennett 2006: 21). Reality didn't always follow this plan but at the very least, the plan provided structure.

Yet neoliberalism creates conditions which eliminate such expectations of stability. Long-term, secure employment is in short supply (Beck 1992; Ong 2006; Sassen 1998; Sennett 1998), leaving instead "displaced workers" (Winson and Leach 2008:8) whose work trajectories and expectations of work are disrupted and altered by recent and ongoing capitalist restructuring (Standing 2011; Sennett 2006). In this transition from Fordism to neoliberalism, the concept of the proletariat, Harvey notes, is increasingly being replaced by the "precariat", a term which refers to those who hold unstable, contingent and often mobile relations to labour. While they have historically made up a large proportion of the workforce, changing labour relations have brought such precarious workers to the forefront in the advanced capitalist world over the past three decades due to deindustrialization and neoliberal restructuring (Harvey 2010: 242-244).This precariat becomes an individual who must deal with and adapt to the instability

and insecurity which goes hand and hand with the contingent world of work in the "new economy" (Pupo and Thomas 2009; Standing 2011).

Labour migration and the necessity of being mobile in a world of contingent work becomes tightly connected to the demand for flexibility and the experiences of precarity. A political economic view of migration underlines that potential migrants serve as a reserve army of labour ready to fulfill the needs of capital (Burawoy 1976, Nartosky 1997) while additionally being "accessible, socialised, disciplined and of the requisite qualities" (Harvey 2010: 58). Such a workforce has to be willing to adapt to (or at least accept) conditions of precarity. The requirement of flexibility entails labour migration in practically all forms of work with forms of contingent and mobile labour becoming a lived reality for many in the North American context as flexible economies increasingly come to demand mobility (Sennett 1999).

In this vein, Sider notes how capital restructuring and the impacts of deindustrialization, capital flight and the requirements of worker flexibility come to fundamentally interrupt the lives of workers and the unemployed. Individuals and communities assume a certain degree of stability throughout their lives and the fundamental concepts of anthropology—culture, social structure, kinship systems and so forth—all were similarly based around such ideas of continuity with these concepts depending "upon today being more or less like both yesterday and tomorrow" (Sider 2006: 257). Yet, "ruptures" (Sider 2006), in which the expected flow of everyday life comes to be interrupted due to the impacts of capital restructuring, exemplify how former conceptions of stability are becoming increasingly scarce. While expectations of stability

still remain part of individual wants and needs such expectations now need to be negotiated with the realities of a neoliberalizing world of work. In a similar line of thought, Dagenais notes how certain social structures of life may be at times unequal or unfair as in terms of intrinsically exploitive working conditions or patriarchal family structures. But at the same time such structures provide some form of "normative orientation". We identify with the social constructions of our lives and come to embed our identities in them. As social change happens, "it may not be the end of the world as some say but it is indeed the end of *a* world" (Dagenais 2008: 154).

Similarly, traditional Marxist conceptions of class and class consciousness were to an extent based around such ideas of stability. A certain degree of continuity was assumed within the labour process with workers in similar conditions of exploitation assembled in specific common places over extended periods of time – the factory floor being the archetypal example (Barber 2010; Smith 1999: 171)—while the underlying mechanisms leading to the development of worker organizations and trade unions depended on workers working together in close proximity (Harvey 1990).

Yet the image of (predominantly male) blue-collar workers assembled over long periods of time working within the same organization is increasingly becoming an anachronism with a defining feature of neoliberalism being the requirement of flexibility: flexibility in the movement of capital (Harvey 1990; Mills 2003), flexibility in the ability to organizationally restructure (Ortiz 2002; Sennett 1999) and the flexibility in regards to labour and the workforce (Molé 2010; Russell 1999; Winson and Leech 2008). In the North American context, this flexibility towards the workforce has been met by phasing

out previous expectations of stable, life-long employment in favour of contingent, unstable work, often broken up into temporary projects or short-term projects (Sennett 2006; Winson and Leech 2008).

The precarious work and connected experiences of contingency, unemployment and underemployment leads to a fragmentation of work identities, "a reversal of the Marxian notion of the class-making potential of socialized workplaces" (Barber 2010:146). The rise of contingent work, by fundamentally altering the potential for contact between workers, also undermines the potential for the development of shared working identities and comes to necessitate the development of individuated relations to work. As such, through paradoxically sharing in the individuated experiences of fragmented and disjointed worlds of work, the "precariat" has been put forth as ostensibly representative of a new emerging class position (Sennett 2006; Standing 2011).

Such themes will be explored in the following work-life narrative of George, an individual from Industrial Cape Breton who attempted to create a contemporary version of stable Fordist-style industrial work in an era in which such work no longer exists locally. An attempt to obtain an approximate form of Fordist work-life is undertaken through labour migration to the Oil Sands. When George's precarious status is painfully revealed, this leads him not to re-evaluate his relation to this particular labour process but rather to accept certain tenets of a neoliberalized subjectivity by coming to perceive his relation to the labour process through an individuated lens. In the process, he comes to change his expectations of the world of work and his expectations of how one views one's self *vis-à-vis* fellow co-workers and employers. Yet, his nostalgic dreams for

full-time and stable industrialized employment lurks in the background, motivating this continued acceptance, consent and acquiesce to neoliberal logics. George does not come to align with neoliberal aims for workers such as himself by refuting previous Fordist-style classed subjectivities. Rather, his consent to such neoliberal logics and neoliberalized class subjectivities arises through his attempts to achieve a new form of Fordist work and life.

Introducing George

George and I came into contact in the beginning months of my fieldwork. I had planned a trip to the western side of Cape Breton Island to visit friends and George had heard about my plans through Freddy, a mutual acquaintance. The night before I left for the two-hour trip, Freddy called to ask if I would give a ride to a friend travelling to a village that was on my route. I agreed and picked up George the next morning, not imagining that he would become what in classical anthropological texts is often referred to as a key informant.

George was staying at a friend's place in Sydney Mines at the time and I met him at the end of his friend's gravel driveway as he was finishing his morning cigarette. A tall, somewhat corpulent man in his mid-thirties with a week-old beard and a dirty Toronto Maple Leafs ball-cap that rarely left his head, George climbed into my old Chrysler Neon and we parted westwards towards Arichet. In due order, he explained to me how his old Tracker had broken down once again but he had found someone selling a jeep of the same year and model for scrap parts not far from my destination. While

George was rather laconic during the first part of our trip, he became animated as he explained how he had been teaching himself mechanics by reading through various tutorials on-line and by watching instructional videos on the internet and how he was confident that he could manage to drive the jeep back to Sydney Mines and use the parts to fix his own. Over the two-hour trip, we gradually began talking about his own work experiences over the years and he identified himself as a welder-turned-scaffolder in between contracts in Fort McMurray. As he began to tell me his stories about working in Alberta, I explained to him my reasons for being in Sydney Mines and my research project about workers who go out West. Before dropping him off in Arichet, George generously agreed to take part in the overall project and to pick up the conversation at a later date.

Over the coming months, George and I spent more and more time together. Weekly Thursday night beer and chicken wings at a local pub became a tradition and requests for a ride to pick up a new part for whatever second-hand car or truck George was in the process of repairing became a regular occurrence. Part way through the winter of 2009/2010, when George underwent retraining to become a safety supervisor, we joined a gym together, motivating each other to continue a thrice-weekly morning work-out. Eventually, in the spring, George's financial situation deteriorated and he found himself effectively without a home. At this time, he came to stay with my wife, son and me in our small one-bedroom basement apartment on the outskirts of Sydney Mines, staying on the futon in our living room for three weeks as part of a cycle of "couch-surfing" while trying to get his life in order.

During this time, George and I frequently spoke about his experiences working out West, his perspectives on the future and his hopes, challenges and worries in regards to continuing to live in Industrial Cape Breton. And yet, a major set of circumstances constantly in the background of George's experiences during this period was the impacts of the late 2000s economic downturn upon his plans for the future and his range of opportunities. In many ways, I saw in George many of the processes underlying the superimposition of worker subjectivity from a Fordist class subjectivity to a neoliberalised class subjectivity: George desperately desired the security and stability to be found in the Fordist-style work organization that the older generation had enjoyed yet found himself increasingly a member of the precariat forced to take on a flexible and mobile role *vis-à-vis* the demands of capital.

George grew up in an industrialized working man's town in decline. The possibility of being a "working man", which for George meant working with one's hands in an industrial setting, was tangibly fading into the past. As a child and teenager growing up in the 1980s and early 1990s, the local industries were either closing or in economica dire straits. Working in the steel mill or in the mines simply did not enter in George's field of possibilities. While industrial blue-collar work seemed to be a man's only option of work, these were the industries of the past and the future seemed uncertain.

As a teenager, George spent the majority of his time working with his three uncles. He describes these brothers as typical Cape Breton "jacks-of-all-trades" that managed to make their livings doing various handy-man and carpentry jobs, occasionally finding work assisting in building a house or in setting up scaffolding platforms as part of

repair projects for local industries. For most of his teenage years he worked part-time with his uncles, learning various carpentry and amateur electrician skills through building garages and wiring houses.

During George's high school years in the early-to-mid-1990s, discussions were underway between the Nova Scotia provincial government and industry to construct an industrial facility on the eastern coast of Cape Breton Island to process off-shore natural gas. Like many in his generation, George was assured that this large project represented the future of industrial work in Cape Breton and would require scores of tradespeople for its construction and operation. George had little patience for the classroom and had considered dropping out of high school multiple times to work full-time with his uncles. But this promise of industrial work for his generation and widespread encouragement from family members and educators gave George the focus to complete high school and undertake a two-year welding course at the local community college.

Yet, during this period of college, the off-shore gas facility project underwent several delays before floundering, with politicians repeatedly holding consultations with project stakeholders and announcing additional delays. Finally, the project was critically downsized, requiring only a handful of workers for its construction and eventual operation, utterly failing to employ an entire generation of coming-of-age workers. George completed his welding course and found himself trained for industrial work that simply did not exist locally. Meanwhile, what little local work available for welders was only available to unionized workers. George's attempts to join the union were unsuccessful as the local welders' union had not "opened up its books" or allowed any

new members for a number of years. Unable to find work as a welder, George was able to find seasonal work through a family contact in a hotel, washing and folding bed linens during the summer and autumn tourist seasons. George's winter months were spent collecting Employment Insurance, finding the occasional short-term contract in Nova Scotia doing non-unionized welding while he continued to work in a variety of "under-the-table" general construction, electrical and carpentry jobs with his uncles.

George reflects that during this period of his life in his early 20s, he felt as though he was just "floating" or "surviving". Although he rarely articulated his connections to the region, leaving Industrial Cape Breton did not enter his range of options. When I inquired about whether he had thought about moving elsewhere, he replied with a rather logical cost-benefit evaluation of the risks of leaving the region. Work, in his viewpoint, is by definition exceptionally difficult to find and he saw no reason to believe that securing work would be any easier outside of Industrial Cape Breton. In fact, he held the opposite view: he understood the under-the-table grey market world of construction on Cape Breton Island and that what little employment he had been able to find was due to family connections. Although he had a wide range of knowledge about mechanics, construction and carpentry, these informally learned skills would be unrecognized outside of his current work circles and location. Moving elsewhere would mean no longer having access to the social networks and social capital (Reimer *et al.* 2008) that granted him access to employment, while moving elsewhere would mean no longer knowing "how things work". Leaving the region, then, simply didn't appear in his calculus of options.

Unanticipated events led George to become further socially implicated in the region. In his early twenties, his girlfriend at the time became unexpectedly pregnant and gave birth to a baby boy. During this period, George briefly moved into his girlfriend's family house. Yet issues in their relationship, no doubt augmented by the stresses of sharing cramped quarters with his girlfriend's parents, brother and a newborn baby, caused their relationship to deteriorate. The couple separated and George returned to live with his mother. Currently, his desire to play a role in his son's life, while made difficult by his tense relationship with his ex-girlfriend and her family, has provided additional reason to stay in the region.

George describes that the series of events that would break him out of a years-long cycle of economic hardship and of "just getting by" came through sheer good luck in 2005. An acquaintance of an uncle who held a position of status in the carpenters' union had a son a few years younger than George. The acquaintance wanted his son to enter the carpenters' union as a scaffolder yet the son required a training course available at a distant community college and lacked a vehicle to travel back and forth to the college. The acquaintance offered to George (who himself had an old jeep at the time) to take the course with his son and drive him to and fro. In return, the acquaintance found a way to grant George entry into the carpenters' union despite the union's official stance that they were not accepting new members at the time.

The scaffolding training course and admission into the carpenters' union gave George access to new sources of employment beyond those in the insecure and sporadic grey labour market that he had been able to secure with his uncles. After a few months of

working short and inconsistent contracts in and around Cape Breton as a scaffolder, followed by prolonged periods of unemployment, other union members recommended he begin bidding on work-camp jobs in the Oil Sands and do like most of his union brothers and "go out West".

Reflecting on this point in time in the mid-2000s, George pulled out an old June 2007 copy of the Cape Breton carpenters' union monthly newsletter to show to me, pointing to the column of print below the newsletter's title to illustrate how abundant work out West was in this period:

> WORK IN ALBERTA
>
> There is a demand for Scaffolders in Alberta and we expect the same for Formworkers in the near future. If you are a TRAINED SCAFFOLDER OR JOURNEYMAN FORMWORKER interested in traveling to Alberta to work - Please call Heather immediately to put your name on the Alberta List (*Brotherhood Tribune* 2007).

George had no issues with having his bid to work in the Oil Sands accepted and, within two weeks of applying, had his first contract placement out West. He was nervous about leaving Cape Breton and going to the work-camps for the first time, yet, desperation was proving to be a good motivation. George describes that he was "dead broke" at the time, heavily indebted to friends and family after years of sporadic employment and having to further indebt himself prior to venturing out West by borrowing money from friends to complete his scaffolders' tool-kit, buy a plane ticket and have money to support himself for the first few weeks in Northern Alberta until his first paycheck.

George had heard ample stories from fellow workers about working out West but was anxious about the new work experiences and living conditions in the work-camp. He kept to himself during the three months of this first contract, doing his work as needed and retreating to his work-camp bedroom in between shifts, watching television in his small bedroom to pass the time: "I was scared shitless the first time I was out there. Didn't say nothing to nobody, I was like a turtle." Yet, George came to speak positively of the experience. The work of a scaffolder, creating the temporary platforms that other tradespeople use for construction, repair and maintenance activities, was physically demanding and the hours, often upwards of eighty hours a week, were long. Yet, the pay, particularly as a result of many overtime hours, was very good while, during a busy month, George was able to earn upwards of five thousand dollars after taxes and union fees. Additionally, living in the work-camp with no rent to pay and living expenses included in his contract provisions meant that he was able to save practically all of his paycheck. It was George's first time away from Nova Scotia and he found the experience of working in the massive developments of the Oil Sands both intimidating and exciting. After his first three-month contract he was able to come home, use the money he earned to pay off many personal debts to family members and friends and then draw Employment Insurance to support his ongoing day-to-day living expenses.

After six weeks at home, George secured another Albertan contract through the union and ventured to the Oil Sands for a subsequent three-month contract. He recalls his second trip as even more positive than the first. While during the first contract, he was working on a workcrew made up of workers from various carpenters' unions from across

Canada, during this second time, his work-crew was made exclusively of workers from his Cape Breton union which, coincidentally, included several of his cousins from his home community. Meanwhile, the long hours of work helped him avoid the boredom of the work-camp and, with a great deal of his debt to friends and family now erased, George was consistently able to meet his monthly financial obligations (for the first time in his life).

As George relates, the initial idea of going out West was simply an experiment with little regard for how long-distance commute work would come to figure into his life plans. Initially not knowing what to expect from the experience, George had intended to travel westwards at most once or twice to, at best, pay back some personal debts. Yet, after this second trip, George came to see the opportunity to work out West as something potentially more permanent. Many of his co-workers were in their 50s or 60s, many of whom had been involved in the commute on a regular basis for the past decade and intended to remain so until retirement. George felt that he could easily continue to take part in this form of mobile work for the next twenty-five or thirty years. A full-time, stable job may have eluded him in Cape Breton but he could instead create his own sense of a full-time, stable job through working out West, continuing to pick up three or four month-long contracts setting up scaffolding while enjoying life "at home" for a month or two between contracts, effectively making such mobile work his life career. His aspirations for the future, which included buying a small plot of land and constructing his own house in a rural corner of Industrial Cape Breton, begun to look as though they may become attainable (for the first time in his life).

For George, then, the opportunity of working out West enabled him to gain a degree of mastery over the unfurling of his own life-narrative and allowed him the resources to set in motion the plans he envisioned for his future. In similar fashion, Sennett's interpretation of Weber focuses on the relation of capital to time and how, for the worker, one of the benefits of operating within capitalism is the structure which work applies to life and the way that one's relationship to work organizes time into the future. The protestant ethic becomes centrally about relations to time: conceptions of future rewards allow people to deal with unsatisfactory present conditions as delayed satisfaction in the present is justified for the sake of long-term goals. This view of life and of work as sacrifice requires a view that the world of work will remain stable, that there will exist a ladder to climb which extends into the future. Work as such provides a "narrative movement" (Sennett 2006: 183-184) in that events in time connect and there is an apparent flow from one event to the next. For George, in the period of the mid-2000s, the Oil Sands industries were in what appeared to be in perpetual expansion and he had found a niche employment that was required even if Oil Sands expansion for some reason ceased; such facilities were always in a constant state of repair and his job was to create the platforms to allow for such repairs to take place. Despite the instabilities found in this long-distance commute – the rotating contracts, the constant relearning and adaptations to new work situations, new lodgings, new co-workers and new fellow work-camp boarders—this decision to engage in mobile labour in the long term gave George mastery over his own narrative movement and concomitant sense of security and stability.

Following a third three-month contract out West, in mid-2007, George found himself personally and financially ready for more independence. He moved out of his mother's house, secured a small one-bedroom house rental and planned to stay home for a two-month vacation, using income from Employment Insurance augmented by his savings for a break before returning out West once more. Over the next several months, George continued this arrangement of back-and-forth movement between Industrial Cape Breton and the Oil Sands, alternating intensive work contracts with extended vacations "at home". Employment Insurance payments and savings from his work contracts allowed him to meet his financial obligations of child support payments, debt servicing and paying back his student loan from his welding course. He purchased a second-hand car in better mechanical condition than his former jeep and imagined that he would soon be able to begin putting money aside to buy a small plot of land.

In early October 2008, George returned home, planning to stay in Industrial Cape Breton until after the Christmas holidays, having no idea that he had just completed his last trip to the Oil Sands for some time.

Unbeknownst to George, while he was completing his final contract of 2008, numerous investors were reversing the trend of the 2000s and were in the process of systematically disinvesting from Oil Sands projects. For the period of the early 2000s leading up to late 2008, the global price of oil had continued on an upwards trajectory, from average annual spot crude oil prices (in US dollars) of $24.36/barrel in 1999, to $31.05/barrel in 2001, to $45.57/barrel in 2004, to $72.39/barrel in 2007 (EIA 2011), finally reaching an apex of $145/barrel in early July 2008. As outlined in the previous

chapter, this period of increasing oil prices saw concomitant dramatic investments of capital into Oil Sands industry operations and expansions. Yet, the financial crisis of the late 2000s, beginning with the sub-prime mortgage crisis of 2007 and spreading into the global equities crash in October 2008, had a likewise deleterious and sudden effect on the price of global oil. In the second half of 2008, global oil prices dramatically tumbled from their high point, quickly reaching a low of $30.28/barrel by December 2008 (EIA 2011).

In the face of low global oil prices, investors who had motivated the dramatic expansion of the Oil Sands throughout the 2000s through rapid and extensive investment just as rapidly withdrew their capital. Many construction, expansion and maintenance projects were delayed, scaled back or outright cancelled. Oil Sands companies and sub-contractors rapidly reduced their employee rosters, a feat that was relatively easy due to a reliance on temporary and contractual forms of labour, while management quickly began implementing measures in the production process to ensure that operations became efficient and "lean" (Pett 2011).

In Industrial Cape Breton and other sending regions, many people found themselves unemployed as various projects were scaled back or eliminated. Individuals who had envisioned long-term careers of back-and-forth employment out West – employment which meant they had to leave their home community on a regular basis but still relatively well-paying industrial work nonetheless – were suddenly faced with the realization of how precarious and contingent these jobs actually were. One newly unemployed worker in a position similar to that in which George was to soon find

himself underlined how the unanticipated circumstances came to impact many living in Industrial Cape Breton:

> I was out there [*in the Oil Sands*] for four and a half months, it was good, I made a lot of money. The people at the contracting firm shook my hand and said, Buddy, right after Christmas we have a huge project, a two or three year project. We want you to come back. Great! And, that's when the economy went belly up. So they pulled the plug on that project, it just sat there idle. And so did a lot of other projects. The rug was taken out from under them and everybody's out of work. And everybody's scrambling 'cause, you're basically living on Unemployment [*Employment Insurance benefits*] until you get back out there again. And so, a lot of people's Unemployment ran out and they were stuck.

Yet the impacts of these corporate decisions and capital disinvestments did not immediately materialize in sending regions such as Industrial Cape Breton. Rather, it was over the course of several months that the scale and consequence of such actions came to be realized by George and others in his position. Several weeks after returning home following his Fall 2008 contract, George began to hear conversations among his relatives and fellow union members that work in the Oil Sands was beginning to become more scarce. Workers were having to wait several weeks longer than usual to secure a contract for out West work while others were being sent home as their projects became cancelled prematurely. George's work as a scaffolder was among the lesser skilled of the tradespeople employed in the Oil Sands industries and also, as George quickly learned, among the most disposable. His older co-workers assured him that there had always been a cyclical component to the labour market and this short downturn would be no different. Yet, George's fears were crystallised when he received his monthly union newsletter in early 2009. The following column prominently underlined many Industrial Cape Breton workers' fears:

WORK IN ALBERTA

> The current work situation in Alberta has not changed since August. They ARE NOT issuing dispatches out of province. The Alberta Local currently has over 1000 members on their Out of Work List. It is not necessary to check with us regarding the work situation in Alberta. If you are wanting to go back out there when the work picks up, please call to put your name on the travel list, if you have not already done so.
>
> When the situation in Alberta changes, we will notify everyone who has put their name on the travel list. We ask members, if you have been laid off in Alberta in the past few months to let us know you are back home and if you are available to work locally.
>
> Also, if you are lucky enough to NOT be laid off yet, please let us know that as well! (*Brotherhood Tribune* 2009)

A year prior, the union hall could not convince enough of its members to answer the call to go out West. In twelve months, as George related, "the feast had turned to famine". George hoped that this lack of work would be a temporary condition and had his savings from past contracts and Employment Insurance payments to support him for a number of months. George was still a young and inexperienced member of the union and the few positions for local unionized work in Cape Breton went to people with more experience, more seniority and who had been unemployed for longer than he. Meanwhile, George's waiting turned to months and his worries that he may not be able to secure work out West became increasingly galvanised. He began to look for local employment, taking a series of under-the-table jobs with relatives. In short order, his savings became exhausted and his Employment Insurance payments expired. He fell behind in his rent and car loan payments while he became more reliant on informal loans from family and friends along with formal credit to support himself.

George describes the bleakness of the 2008-09 winter when there seemed to be little hope. Workers with far more seniority in the union were also unemployed, his

savings were exhausted, his credit card utilized to the limit while many of his friends and family in similar financial positions were unable to grant him the informal credit that had assisted him in the past. George explains that he took on whatever odd jobs he could find with his uncles yet the couple of hundred dollars he was able to earn every month did little to mitigate his financial woes: "By the end of the winter, I couldn't even afford the five dollar bag of [*wood*] pellets to heat the place. I lost 20 pounds that winter." With no money, he eventually stopped paying his monthly credit card bill and his monthly car loan payments and began to fall behind on his monthly rent payments. Spring culminated with a desperate conversation with a collection agency representative requesting that he pay back his car loan: "I told 'em, I'm looking for work down here, there just ain't nothing." Owing several thousand dollars to his banking institution, unable to keep up with his formal debt payments, severely behind in his child support payments and having just had his car repossessed, George claimed bankruptcy. After a difficult period of unemployment and unable to continue paying rent, he was forced to leave his rental and return to stay in the spare bedroom of his mother's mobile home.

At this juncture, several points of discussion can be raised in regards to George's experiences of mobile labour. A central idea in the political economy of migration is that processes of migration allow capital to be linked to distant pools of labour allowing capital to draw upon such sources of labour and include them in the labour process (Higgins 2005; Narotzky 1997). The rising documented work-camp population of the Oil Sands throughout the 2000s—from 5 903 temporary workers in 2000, to 9 178 in 2005, to 26 284 in 2008 (WBRM 2010)—underlines how access to temporary labour has been

advantageous to the oil extraction industry by providing flexible and temporary workforces which allows for the rapid periods of expansion which we have seen throughout the past decade.

A second central tenet in the political economy of migration is that systems of migration allow for an externalization of the costs of worker reproduction. Burawoy in fact defines a migrant labour system intrinsically as one in which the physical processes of renewal and maintenance of the labour force are separated from processes of production. The costs of such renewal and maintenance that would typically be borne by the employer is instead externalised to the sending community or state (1976). While neoclassical theories of labour migration have used languages of push-and-pull dynamics to present such movements as logical reactions to differences in labour markets and employment opportunities (Martin 2003), Sider (2006, *cf.* 1980) has argued how such relations of mobile labour are representative of exploitive sets of practices in which certain regions come to extract assets from others. In the case of Newfoundland, a province with a historical trend of sending workers to distant sites of production in Canada and beyond, the costs of "exporting" such workers outweigh any gains. The productivity and profits which such workers produce are realized outside Newfoundland while the costs of producing them are held within Newfoundland. "It seems far more likely that Newfoundland is actually subsidizing mainland Canada, just as all the "illegal Mexicans" working in the United States represent a subsidy to the United States paid by some of the very poorest regions of Mexico" (2006: 255).

I would add that, as capital increasingly takes on neoliberal characteristics, migrant labour becomes additionally useful for externalising the costs and consequences of *flexibility* in neoliberal relations. Between 2008 and 2010, during the economic downturn, the work-camp population of the Oil Sands region decreased from 26 284 to 23 325 (WBRM 2010; 2008) as the Oil Sands quickly shed at least three thousand individuals employed through various schemes of temporary and contractual work arrangements. This system of work organization proved beneficial for capital by allowing for the easy dismissal of such workers once their labour was no longer required. Meanwhile, the impacts of the resultant unemployment came to be divided into the various sending communities from which such labour originates. While three thousand individuals found themselves in positions not unlike that of George, the overall impacts of this divestment upon workers were instead diluted and diffused across the various communities from which the Oil Sands recruits temporary labourers rather than being concentrated at the point of production specifically. In line with hegemonic processes' capacities to conceal relations of power, such externalisation pre-empted critique of the social impacts of divestment in the Oil Sands with little to no public, media or political critique or intervention accompanying this widespread loss of employment.

It was during this period, several months after his return, that George and I became acquainted and began to assemble his work-life narrative. George, for his part, continued to chart out a course of future plans during what he saw as highly uncertain times. By this point, George had realized that work in the Oil Sands would not provide him with the life-long career that he desired, while the ongoing economic downturn made

him realize that this form of work was not something that he could expect nor depend on. He had been able to secure a series of short-term local scaffolding contracts through his union over the course of the spring of 2009 yet these sporadic contracts, being only one or two weeks long at most, did little to improve his financial situation beyond allowing him to collect the necessary work hours to once again claim Employment Insurance payments.

Meanwhile, his extended period of unemployment had given him time to reflect and realize that the only redeeming quality of working out West was the pay it offered. Becoming habituated to new worksites, new work crews, new work-camps and new supervisors during each separate contract was exhausting. At times, he spoke very positively of his experiences out West and the various and unique types of work that he did. Yet, on other days, depending on his mood, he reflected on his out West experiences far more negatively. Undertaking new contracts every few months, repeatedly adapting to others' styles of work and personalities was tiring. As he put it, he seldom felt part of a team; rather he was an individual among a temporary collection of other individuals.

> Like, that time that it was just me and my cousins on a crew, that was good, 'cause I knew they had my back. But, the other times, you never know what's going on with the guys you're working with. You can't depend on them, they don't got your back. Everybody's just looking after their own skin, y'know?

George explained how he realized that people work differently with one another once they realize that they most likely will never work with a specific team member once a contract is completed: "Guys can be a prick to ya, it doesn't matter 'cause six months down the line, you're not seeing them again. And, I guess me too, I could be a bit of a prick to some of those guys too."

George frequently described the period upon returning home to Cape Breton as one characterized by the feeling of "floating" once more, no longer sure of what the future would bring. Yet, he tempered these feelings with a renewed commitment to finding a job locally, began dropping off resumes at every industrial facility on the island and making use of any social contact he knew to help him secure local employment.

Several months after George had returned home and began to focus on finding local work, we had a coffee after he had completed an aptitude test with dozens of other jobseekers to work at a pulp-and-paper mill located on the western side of the island. By this point it had been months since George had worked and he was becoming increasingly frustrated at his seeming lack of progress and lack of opportunities to find any work locally. He aired his frustrations that so many other unemployed men had shown up to write the test when there were only four positions being opened at the mill. During this talk, he rephrased the difficulties he had undergone over the previous years as partly due to his commitment to Cape Breton Island and that this commitment to place ought to be compensated with a secure job. "One thing for sure, I deserve that job, cause I never left here. I mean, I went away but I never left. I had to go away so that I could stay... Been going away four years now and nothing to show for it." Interestingly, George also reflected that while it hadn't allowed him to advance, working in the Oil Sands had provided him with something of a livelihood. Despite being in a considerably difficult financial position, he added "But, at the end of the day, I'm not worse off, either."

George didn't get the job. Yet, in the meantime, he had found a way to turn his labour into capital. In the geographically vast region of Industrial Cape Breton, a vehicle

is a necessity to travel in the area and there is a large informal used-car market. George made use of his abundant amounts of free time to buy affordable used cars in disrepair and, by using his amateur mechanic skills that he had picked up over the years, repair and re-sell such cars. Without access to any abundant source of capital his venture was on a small scale, typically consisting of holding onto one vehicle at a time, simultaneously using it for transportation while increasing its value through repairing and replacing various components. As such, his vehicle became a mobile source of capital for him. For instance, at one point during my fieldwork he had need of a hundred dollars to repay a debt. He quickly sold the twenty-year old car he had been previously driving for a thousand dollars, paid the debt and bought an old jeep for five hundred dollars and used the remaining balance to purchase several hundred dollars worth of automotive parts. Over the course of a weekend he restored the jeep to working order. Several months later, he was falling behind in child support payments to his former girlfriend and so sold his jeep for two thousand dollars, paid what he owed and bought another five hundred dollar car and began the process anew. When my own 2001 Chrysler Neon broke down during fieldwork, George kindly offered me six hundred dollars for it and, within the month and after a few hours of repair work, was able to re-sell it for twice as much.

Once again, over the course of 2009, George was unable either to find a job locally or secure a contract out West. The savings that he accumulated during his last tour in the Oil Sands had been exhausted almost immediately upon his return through paying off debts to friends and family members and he was completely reliant on his rather meagre Employment Insurance payments and the odd week-long contract working in

Industrial Cape Breton given to him by the carpenters' union. Meanwhile, he had realized that his earlier declaration of bankruptcy had made him ineligible to apply for official sources of credit, making his dreams of eventually buying a small plot of land and building a house in the countryside that much more distant.

By this point, in the early months of 2010, George had given up on the idea of finding local work and had come to see the Oil Sands as once again his only opportunity for some form of employment. He came to realize that such contingent and precarious work may be better than no work at all. Meanwhile, he came to perceive that the reason for his long periods of underemployment and unemployment were not due to a structural relationship of employment and unemployment between the Oil Sands region and Cape Breton, nor due to the idiosyncrasies of the global market in regards to natural resources, nor due to the cyclical boom-and-bust cycles of capital. Rather, his unemployment was due to his own personal failings in adapting to the changing world of work and his reliance on a trade in which the supply of workers was greater than the demand. Scaffolders such as himself were "a dime a dozen" and he needed to differentiate himself from other workers by building up his skills. With his Employment Insurance payments once more about to expire and the realization of a vicious cycle of work, unemployment, debt and debt repayment upon him, George applied for government funding to undergo a three-month program at a local institution specializing in training local workers for Oil Sands work to receive the credentials to become an industrial safety supervisor.

I was initially surprised by George's desire to leave his union and become a safety supervisor. Several months prior, George had explained to me the various hierarchies and

camaraderies among workers in various trades on Oil Sands industrial sites and various views on safety and safety regulations. A widespread view among tradespeople is that certain industrial site safety regulations are in place primarily for insurance purposes rather than for worker safety, put in place by bureaucratic managers with little conception of the realities of the workplace. At the same time, work crews who complete tasks more slowly than others are viewed negatively and slowness in completing tasks could impact on one's ability to be rehired for future contracts. In order for a particular job to be completed efficiently and effectively, some safety rules need to be occasionally circumvented. Within these environments, the safety supervisor, as a non-unionized company employee whose job is to ensure that safety regulations are adhered to, is a particularly reviled individual.

As part of a unionized scaffolding workcrew, George and his team would ideally "look out for each other" and "watch each other's back" to make sure everyone stayed safe while getting the job done, a necessity on jobsites where the official safety regulations and the imperative from foremen and supervisors to complete jobs quickly are often at odds. The safety supervisor, though, was a "company man", interested in the company's well-being over that of the individual worker and is seen as either, at best, an individual trying to enforce safety protocols that often hamper and prevent the flow of work or, at worst, an agent of the company who minimizes the liabilities of the company by downloading the responsibilities of risk and safety onto the individual worker. Months before deciding to pursue this position, George explained:

> They drive around all day and check up on you to see if you're wearing your hard-hat and all that. When there's an accident, they'll interview the guy that

> got hurt and try to figure out how to put it in their reports that it was the guy's fault the accident happened and not the company [...] There's so much safety protocol bullshit, every guy's going miss one thing or that here and there.

As such, I asked George how he would consolidate his newfound desire to become a safety supervisor with his previous views on the position. He explained that first, the work of a scaffolder was beginning to have a toll on his body. He had been doing it for only five years and wondered how some of his family members had been able to do it all their lives. Moreover, scaffolding, as his experiences to date revealed, represents a particularly precarious position, subject to long periods of unemployment. He was ready for an "easy job" that paid well: "I just want to get paid to drive around all day and just be a fucking zombie".

George carried on through the course, although his financial hardships continued on over the months. Although he was given a stipend to support himself, the amount was low and he found himself in debt once again to family members and slowly falling behind in child support payments. Meanwhile, his attempts to secure a small loan to support himself during this period were met with refusal from several banks. Several weeks into the course he was forced to sell his car to support himself and, with neither the funds to buy nor time to repair another used car, was without transportation. His mother's house was some distance away from the training institute and when an experience of hitch-hiking back-and-forth proved inefficient, he began staying at friends' houses close by the institute, sleeping on couches and in spare bedrooms (including a three-week sojourn on my futon) over the months-long course.

My period of fieldwork concluded as George neared the completion of his course and I stayed in contact with him afterwards. He was stymied in his efforts to apply his new-found certification and had been unable to secure a job as a safety supervisor. Shortly after, he was able to secure another contract out West as a scaffolder through his union. In a phone conversation, I asked him how the circumstances of work had changed in the nearly six years that he had been involved in the long-distance commute. He reflected for a moment and then mentioned how his first time out West, he had his work-camp lodging paid for through the sub-contractor who hired him. If it wasn't for that fact, he and a lot of his co-workers from Cape Breton probably wouldn't have attempted the commute in the first place. He reflected how the first time out West, it was the Oil Sands companies and sub-contractors who couldn't find enough workers to complete the projects on time. The "tables had turned" in the past few years and rather than sub-contractors battling one another for a scarcity of workers, workers where competing amongst themselves for a scarcity of employment. He explained that in 2011, few if any scaffolders from Cape Breton were being offered work-camp accommodations. He accepted the latest contract knowing that he would have to find his own temporary lodging in the city of Fort McMurray and was at the time renting a room in Fort McMurray's abundant grey rental market. He had effectively accepted working, living and salary conditions far worse than that of his first contract. But now, he explained, he "like a lot of guys, got a taste of the money out here" and simply did not see much in the way of other options. Although working out West, he realized, wouldn't be a long-term

situation, it would provide a form of employment until he found some form of stable, secure work "back home".

Experiences of Precarity and Neoliberal Subjectivity

An idealized neoliberal subject, one who accepted conditions of instability, flexibility and flux uncritically and without resistance as Sennett points out, would be "an unusual sort of human being" (2006:5). "Most people are not like this; they need a sustaining life narrative, they take pride in being good at something specific and they value the experiences they've lived through. The cultural ideal required in new institutions thus damages many of the people who inhibit them" (Sennett 2006: 5). Certain subject positions and certain circumstances come to "prime" individuals for neoliberal subjectivities in which such conditions of flexibility become tenable. In interviewing temp workers (the fastest growing employment sector in the US), Sennett notes that those who do well, in that they feel they retain a degree of mastery over their lives and have been able to establish a life-narrative not connected to the structure afforded by stable work, are also those who possess a high tolerance for ambiguity (Sennett 2006: 50). Meanwhile, Sider notes how, for Newfoundlanders who work in various northern construction industries (by which I assume he refers to, along with other projects, Oil Sands commute work), their experiences of unemployment and underemployment at home lead them to actually be grateful for the harsh conditions associated with this style of work and life (2006). Insecurity, instability within the labour market, unsure work trajectories and unsure futures existed before a neoliberal era made

such qualities commonplace. Yet such circumstances make the tenets of neoliberalism familiar and more easily accepted, although that acceptance may be one met with deference rather than enthusiasm.

Narotzky notes that within a neoliberal era, "the more uncertainty is produced, the less capacity to orient personal action toward a future expectation" (2010:136) and this heightened sense of uncertainty exists as a central theme of experiences of neoliberalism (Harvey 2005; Sassen 1988; Tsing 2004). Yet, the uncertainty or "strategic confusion" (Sennett 2006) found within neoliberalism is experienced differently by different class positions. Sennett notes that "Davos Man", the archetypal corporate executive, thrives in this demanded environment of flexibility and exploits the capacities which accompany flexibility. Similarly, Standing (2011) speaks of the "proficians", the professionals and technicians who adapt and thrive within the insecurities of a neoliberal era, operating as skilled neoliberalized agents "with the expectation and desire to move around without an impulse for long-term, full-time employment in a single enterprise" (2011: 8). But flexibility for some comes to play out as feelings of intense insecurity and in a world of instability, this is where class comes into play. "A child of privilege can afford strategic confusion, a child of the masses cannot" (Sennett 2006: 80), simply due to access to resources and networks of support.

Meanwhile, the Fordist organization of labour and the experiences of economic decline prepare one for participation in neoliberalized arenas of work through the creation of terms which shape necessary collusion. Whenever capitalism has used new technologies on the shop floor, workers have had the capacity to resist. For instance, the

Luddite movement strove to break the machinery which made their labour redundant while Burawoy's study explored workers' resistance to aspects of the labour process through "soldiering" and "goldbricking" on the shop floor to intentionally slow down the work process and resist forms of Taylorism (1979:57). Yet, new forms of capital structuring reorganize the "factory floor" of work itself with the focus on reorganization of entire societal processes rather than simply the worker's relation to work. In a neoliberal era, one has to consent to certain logics of neoliberalism to be allowed entry into the workforce while one's participation legitimizes and allows for the continuation of the particular organizational form in question. Hegemonic processes necessitate workers' acceptance, if not necessarily adoption, of neoliberal subjectivities and acquiescence to the instability and precarity of contemporary work trajectories while the only viable options for protest against such forms appear to be to remove one's self from that particular type of work organization. When precarity, temporariness, unemployment and high turnover rates are built into the organization of work, then traditional threats of labour struggle are pre-empted (*c.f.* Scott 1985; Standing 2011).

A neoliberalized classed subject, then, becomes an individuated worker who operates under conditions of instability and insecurity. Workers do not necessarily accept the principles of such a subjectivity uncritically and may prefer as in George's case, other ways of being, potentially informed through nostalgic images of the past, particularly that of the North American gendered working-class blue-collar male that is increasingly uncommon in regions undergoing deindustrialization (Broughton and Walton 2006).

Such workers find themselves adapting to and operating under terms that shape their necessary collusion, to the point where they at least accept the tenets of such a neoliberalized classed subjectivity if not necessarily embracing them enthusiastically. Dunk (2002) argues that, in a neoliberal era, Braverman's deskilling hypothesis has been turned on its head. While Fordism and Tayloristic principles sought to homogenize the worker, making them machine-like, dependable and interchangeable, in the new, post-Fordist, flexible economy, workers are told to be individuals, flexible, multi-skilled and ever-learning. In a similar vein, Gershon notes that neoliberal subjectivity[45] means a redefinition of the person in that, previously, the person owned his body and sold his labour in the market. The neoliberal perspective has people see themselves as businesses to be self-managed as ensembles of skills (2011). Neoliberalism creates individualized workforces (Mills 2003; Blim 1991; Sennett 1998) while a neoliberalized classed subjectivity contains an acceptance or adaptation to flexibility within the labour market and of ensuing precarious status. I see this slow shift in George's relations to and expectations from work and relations to others at work as a continuation of his attempts to secure stable employment but that, at the same time, this desire for an idealized form of blue-collar work drove him to further accept elements of a neoliberalized subjectivity.

Meanwhile, during his period of indeterminate employment in the Oil Sands industries, various changes, some obvious, others more subtle, had taken place in which many of the costs of this migration route had been shifted from industry and sub-contracting companies onto workers themselves. The direct flight from Sydney to Fort

[45] Gershon uses the term "neoliberal agency" but in a fashion near-synonymous to my use of "neoliberal subjectivity". I have retained my vocabulary in discussing her study.

McMurray had been cancelled and more workers were funding their own travel to the Oil Sands. Many workers who had previously been lodged in work-camps were now venturing out West and finding their own temporary accommodations in Fort McMurray. Individuals were increasingly enrolling in safety training programs at private institutions, training that was previously company-paid as part of incoming workers' orientations in hopes that it would improve their chances of being employable. The economic downturn underlined this type of work arrangement as precarious and unstable and had allowed measures for the industry to further reduce the cost of labour. Yet the ensuing prolonged periods of unemployment caused workers to accept and adapt to their particularly uncertain and contingent situations, and not to reconsider their relations with this particular work organization. In short, these circumstances conditioned labour to accept less in a situation in which they were already particularly vulnerable. Workers had to discard the dream of secure full-time employment in Industrial Cape Breton and accept the idea of embarking on career-long cycles of temporary labour migrations and yet now find themselves implicated in paths of increasingly unsure and unpredictable work trajectories.

Section 2

Dynamics of Migration Part 1: The "Away"

Chapter Four

Burning Desires for Labour: Normalising Temporary Work in the Oil Sands

An issue emerging from the creation of spaces of capital—and a key contradiction in capital's requirement for the mobility of labour—is that while capital requires labour to be willing to relocate to where labour power is required, capital also requires labour to be accessible, secure, dependable and predictable. In other words, processes of capital require to some degree captive labour (Harvey 2001, 2010). It is no small feat for this contradiction to be overcome. Connecting labour to where capital requires labour power requires substantial "work" originating from disparate elements in the forming of such connections. This chapter centres on the Oil Sands as a receiving region of mobile labour and places the focus on two main issues: the extent to which temporary labour has become a structural necessity in the Oil Sands and the factors which have allowed for the region to become and persist as a receiving region of temporary labour. I outline the difficult task of enumerating the number of temporary workers in the Oil Sands, a challenging endeavor complicated by the industry's practice of splitting work processes into temporary short-term contracts accomplished through complex systems of sub-contractors. Tracing such shifting numbers of temporary workers is necessary, however, to show not only the scale at which migrant labour has become a structural feature of the organization of work in the Oil Sands industry but also to underscore that this structural necessity is growing both absolutely and in proportion to the numbers of non-temporary

workers employed in the Sands. From here, I explore factors which interact to allow the region to play host to tens of thousands of temporary workers at any given period: particularly, the sub-contracting system and the formal and informal systems allowing for temporary worker accommodation. A main theme running through this chapter is that hegemonic processes come to be embedded in place: while the Oil Sands constitute a particular form of neoliberal space with Fordist characteristics, the organization of production is particularly post-Fordist and has been structured so as to make temporary and flexible labour a fundamental and moreover normalised aspect of the ongoing functioning of industry.

Oil Sands, Migration and the Limits of Neoliberal Space

Harvey notes that one of the overarching goals motivating the transition from Fordist to neoliberalism is to overcome the "rigidities" of Fordism. Under Fordism, with production organized along the lines of long-term designs and large-scale fixed investments, labour had the capacity to derive substantial power from capital's relative embeddedness in place (1990, 2010). Shared experiences on the factory floor, worker solidarity and the subsequent possibilities of labour struggle and action resulted in part from capital's relative immobility compared to that of the worker (Collins 2002; Smith 1999:171). A fundamental motivational factor in the transition from coal to oil as the central source of energy was to circumvent these powers which labour gained as a result of such rigidity. Yet, in many ways, Oil Sands industries retain key Fordist characteristics in their composition: large-scale industrial sites employing techniques of mass

production, invested in a particular place with long periods of amortization in order to realize profit and employing a large, often unionized and specialized blue-collar workforce (Harvey 1990). As such they remain subject to these same rigidities. As production sites based upon resource extraction, the consortiums of the Oil Sands, once having made the initial investment in infrastructure, become by necessity situated within a particular place and curtailed in their ability to relocate operations. Additionally, the mining and processing of bitumen is an extremely capital-intensive process entailing significant time and financial investments in technology and infrastructure, representing considerable "fixed capital" (Marx 1973:728). As Rothstein points out, although capital has enormous power, capital is not omnipotent (2010) and the limitations of such instances of capital must be underlined and brought into perspective. Yet while I underline the limitations and rigidities experienced by the Oil Sands industries below, I also argue that such industries have attempted to overcome such Fordist-related rigidities primarily by adopting neoliberal tenets aimed towards managing the workforce which above all focuses on ensuring that workers remain "flexible" (Harvey 1990).

Oil Sands industries become inherently entrenched in certain ways of operation while, given the size, scale and complexity of operations, necessarily adopt conservative approaches to innovation as novelty becomes increasingly costly, difficult and risky to implement (LeRiche 2006; Levant 2009; *cf.* Pratt 1976). By the same token, the complexity and labour intensiveness of operations, particularly when compared to other global oil production industries, mean the Oil Sands industry's capacity to respond to global fluctuations in supply and demand is severely limited. As a point of comparison,

an enterprise involved in conventional oil production (as opposed to the "alternative" form of production found in the Oil Sands) can respond quickly to increased global demand for oil once the necessary infrastructure is in place through the relatively simple mechanical method of pumping more oil from underground reserves. In certain cases, as with Saudi Aramco, such reserve capacity permits oil giants not only to respond to global fluctuations in supply and demand but also to exert a measure of control over global oil prices by limiting or increasing production (Pratt 1976). By comparison, within the Oil Sands industry, creating extra capacity is a years-long endeavour consisting of securing investors, expanding or creating additional strip-mine operations or *in situ* projects, expanding or constructing processing facilities to process bitumen into synthetic crude and securing expanded labour forces for such construction and to support ongoing operations. Meanwhile, the land-locked location of the Oil Sands requires the construction of pipe-lines for the transportation of synthetic crude oil adding the additional challenge of connecting supply with demand to the equation. For instance, the delays and political roadblocks in construction of certain key pipelines in 2011 and 2012 have severely curtailed Oil Sands consortiums' abilities to access certain markets (Economist 2011, 2012).

The Oil Sands industry additionally faces limiting factors beyond the site of production, operating under a regulatory regime imposed by the Canadian state and having to operate within the context of particular environmental regulations, insurance directives and labour and safety codes and guidelines (LeRiche 2006; Levant 2010). This is not to say that such companies necessarily abide by such bureaucratic regulations at all

times but the processes of both adhering to and attempting to circumvent such regulations adds another layer of rigidity to the organization of production. As well, the Oil Sands industry operates under a context of public scrutiny not entirely common to other commercial endeavors, with media, academia and special interest groups bringing attention to the operations' deleterious environmental impacts (Nikiforuk 2008; Woynillowicz and Severson-Baker 2005), impacts of the operations on nearby indigenous communities (Business Day 2011), abuses of labour laws and labour safety (De Guerre 2009), and policies in regards to provincial tax and royalty schemes (Ploudre 2009), to name just a few central issues.

As such, the Oil Sands industries operate under a large set of constraints or rigidities (Harvey 1990), some common to Fordist-style operations, others unique to the Oil Sands with comparatively little room to introduce flexibility into the organization of production. Yet, Fordism and neoliberalism are not mutually exclusive or necessarily opposed they can be complementary and used in different respects within the same industrial and social environment (Russell 1999) while Fordist infrastructures can be combined with neoliberal techniques of flexible workforce organization (Ong 1987, 1991, 2006). As Chapter Two explored, the Oil Sands industries came to be formed in the early periods of neoliberalism and requirements for flexible labour came to be built into the landscape and into the organization of production early on – the creation of a particular form of physical landscape allows and motivates certain ongoing hegemonic processes. The establishment and development of the Oil Sands industry went hand-in-hand with a reliance on temporary labour secured through webs of sub-contractors and

through the division of work into short-term projects (Ferguson 2011). The industry comes to reflect wider trends of a neoliberalizing labour market where a smaller number of stable "core" workers are augmented by a growing number of temporary workers "that can quickly be taken on board and equally quickly and costlessly be laid off when times get bad" (Harvey 1990:152), allowing for periods of rapid expansion and contraction and the externalization of the impacts of unemployment in times of contraction.

While the industry has grown hand-in-hand with a reliance of temporary labour, this reliance on temporary labour has increased over time as industrial developments in the Oil Sands have grown in number and size. In less than two decades, Fort McMurray and the Oil Sands have gone from being an unfamiliar remote area in the northern hinterlands of the Canadian boreal forests known mainly to small numbers of mobile construction workers as a place where long hours and decrepit work-camps equaled large pay checks and transformed to a publicly and widely recognized central component of the Canadian economy, a multi-billion dollar oil-extraction industry said to rival that of Saudi Arabia. In the process, the number of temporary workers has increased dramatically: work-camps have gone from housing several hundred to nearly 30 000 mobile workers over the past fifteen years (WBRM Census 2010) while the populations of "transient workers" sojourning in the Oil Sands city of Fort McMurray dramatically ebb and flow with increases and contractions of the industry's developments.

Defining Migrants and Long-Distance Commuters

As noted in Chapter Two, industrial development in the Oil Sands did not begin in earnest until the late 1960s and early 1970s with the establishment of the Syncrude and Suncor plants (Pratt 1976). Yet, from the 1980s onwards, with the global price of oil low and the price of developing Oil Sands industries high, industrial development progressed at a snail's pace. New government policies and practices which went into effect in 1996 as a result of substantial collaboration between government and private industry created business-friendly conditions which instigated massive investments into the Oil Sands industry (Alberta 2012), with such investment and concomitantly increasing construction and extraction activities in the Oil Sands continuing as the global price of oil steadily climbed through the 2000s (Ferguson 2011).

A proxy for the level of industrial activity in the Oil Sands region is the shifting population of Wood Buffalo Regional Municipality (WBRM) (Aylward 2006). WBRM consists primarily of Fort McMurray, which was created and populated primarily to serve as a site of labour accommodation for oil sands projects (Alberta 1980), along with several smaller surrounding communities. The Oil Sands industry is evidently by far the largest principal employer of residents of the municipality (WBRM Census 2008; 2010). As such, the region's population has grown directly in relation to the increase of construction and production in the Oil Sands industry and times of stasis and growth in the industry is reflected in WBRM's [46] shifting population. The region had a relatively

[46] Wood Buffalo Regional Municipality was incorporated in 1994, primarily to allow Fort McMurray additional political power in manoeuvring the town's relation *vis-à-vis* the Oil Sands

stable population from 1978 until 1996, growing by a modest 1.1 per cent during this time from 36 810 to 37 222. As the Oil Sands industry underwent a dramatic expansion from 1996 onwards, the WBRM census reported the population as doubling in twelve years, growing to 75 171 by 2008 (WBRM Census 2008) and further increasing to 104 338 by 2010 (WBRM Census 2010).

Included within these numbers are estimates of "transient workers": the temporary workers employed in the region who, although not "residents" in the traditional sense, still make use of local infrastructures and services and hence are of key interest to the municipality in terms of urban development planning and in attempts to access per capita provincial funding for municipalities (Aylward 2006; Nicols 2007; WBRM 2008, 2010). The task of enumerating shifting work forces employed through a number of large and small sub-contracting enterprises and defined principally through their mobility and non-permanency has proven a major challenge. Reports made on behalf of the WBRM and the Oil Sands industries which strive to enumerate the actual numbers of temporary workers in the region have been far from conclusive about what percentage of the population is "temporary" and who is classified as a temporary worker alternates depending on the particular report and the particular methodologies used.

---

industry. For instance, as a result of incorporation, WBRM is entitled to a portion of provincial royalties paid by Oil Sands industry to the province of Alberta, along with other forms of provincial support in order to finance certain public work projects and the ongoing expansion of the city (Interview with Mayor Melissa Blake, Fort McMurray, April 17th, 2009). As such, pre-1994 population records refer to the collective populations of the communities which are now incorporated as the WBRM.

Classifying forms of labour mobility and the subtle distinctions between temporary and indeterminate workers has proven a challenge in studies of migration, with terms such as "migrant", "commuter", "traveller" and "resident" holding nuanced differences in the arrangements of time and space between home-lives and work-lives (Amit and Rapport 2002; Olwig 2007; Rapport and Dawson 1998). Both Cohen and Sirkeci (2011) and Trager (2005) note that the term "labour migrant" suggests both a temporal and spatial separation between a "home" and "away", yet the lengths of time and distance are arbitrary and dependent on the researcher using the terms. While the crossing of a border or some form of boundary is often used as a point of denotation, Cohen and Sirkeci (2011) note that forms of border crossings are an increasingly frequent aspect of work lives and that many border crossings may be better surmised under the label of "commuters" rather than "labour migrant", particularly as exemplified in the European Union where individuals frequently reside in one country while working in another. Gmelch (1980), in an early work, points out the difficulties in defining who becomes labelled a "migrant" with often the only differences between migrant and resident being an unspoken desire to return to an elsewhere on the part of the individual (1980) while Olwig (2007) and Stefansson (2004) similarly hint that the term of "migrant" often refers to individuated desires to return and sentiments of belonging to a particular home or elsewhere rather than standing as an objective category.

As such, the term of "labour migrant" which I use to describe temporary workers to underline such movements as the circulation of labour power (Narotzky 1997; Burawoy 1976), is admittedly not one which has been commonly applied to temporary

workers in the Oil Sands. Within Fort McMurray, such workers are colloquially (and often derogatorily) referred to as "transients" or "transient workers". In policy and certain research literatures, the terms "long-distance commuters" (Storey 2010), "shadow populations" (Aylward 2006), "mobile workers" or "mobile construction workers" (Nicols 2007) are frequently used, while colloquially, in policy and in media, the term "commuters" is becoming increasingly prevalent (Aylward 2007; Storey 2010; *cf.*CBC 2007). Within Industrial Cape Breton, the colloquial terms applied to such workers include "back-and-forthers", "21-and-7er's[47]" or, more generally and more popularly, simply those who go "out West" to work.

Yet, these terms all contain certain deficiencies in capturing the diversity and range of work experiences within these patterns of migration. Terms that adequately summarise the diversity of experiences—such as the lengths of time spent working, the conditions of work and living, the degree of separation between work and home and the extent to which such movements are institutionalised or not—are difficult to come by in terms of the situation of the Oil Sands and in migration studies more generally. Within the Oil Sands industries, in Fort McMurray and in the connected construction, services and administration sectors, there are myriad work experiences and work arrangements which make it challenging to develop umbrella terms applicable to all mobile work experiences.

[47] This term refers to a popular work schedule consisting of three weeks working in the Oil Sands followed by one week at home before beginning the process anew.

This difficulty in typifying migration experiences has also been noted in discussions of Newfoundland/Oil Sands labour migration. Storey has mentioned similar challenges in categorizing such workers, noting that no terms are able to convey the complexity of such movements and that "long-distance commuters" is too general, as workers in practically all settings commute to a certain degree. Other terms such as "fly-in/fly-out workers", do little to add any explanatory value. As such, Storey refers to such back-and-forth workers as "commute workers" as a satisfactorily if not completely adequate general term (2009; personal communication 2011). At other times, Storey has differentiated between "commute workers" as those who participate in back-and-forth movements while using the term "temporary migrants" to refer to those who live in the Oil Sands area on a temporary basis (2010).

While my interest is not in creating new categories or labels, I do want to underline the diversities and commonalities of labour mobilities in the Oil Sands region. In my ethnographic work, I found it useful to draw attention to different forms of mobility and make distinctions between two broad forms of movement in terms of temporal differences: those who engage in frequent "circular" movements between home and away and those who have relocated temporarily to the Oil Sands in which their time "away" is more of a longer-lasting "sojourn" rather than a brief "voyage". As such, for my own purposes, in an act of heuristic simplification, temporary workers in the Oil Sands region can be very broadly divided into two categories: 1) those who work in the Oil Sands yet hold a residence elsewhere and regularly travel "home" on a regular basis, either between work contracts or during periods of vacation during a work contract; and

2) those who live and work in the Oil Sands region yet see their period in the Oil Sands as a temporary experience. For lack of better terms, for the present, I refer to the former group as "back-and-forth workers" and the latter as "sojourners". Within this first group, migration experiences tend to be more formalized or organized by external parties, as in the case of mobile work contracts which are coordinated between Albertan and Cape Breton union halls. For the second group, migratory experiences tend to be more *ad hoc* or self-organized: such workers typically secure their own transportation to and lodging within Fort McMurray and may temporarily work at one job or find a string of contracts over a period of time, utilizing personal networks to access information and resources to achieve these goals while residing in the Oil Sands on an indeterminate basis. For reasons I have mentioned above, for my purposes, "labour migrant" adequately serves as an umbrella term for all temporary workers in the Oil Sands region while branching labour migrants into back-and-forth workers and sojourners allows me to distinguish, at least broadly, between different forms of movement taking place in and to the oil sands region.

Yet, these categories of back-and-forth workers and sojourners are admittedly rather ambiguous. The lines between the two are exceedingly blurry and hardly mutually exclusive as a worker will potentially drift from one category to another during their tenure of employment in the Oil Sands[48]. And so as the act of delineating the terms by

[48] In previous and subsequent chapters, the work-life narratives of Penny, Jonathan, Ann and George detail how workers frequently shifted from forms of externally organized labour migration (such as that mediated by trades unions or particular employers recruiting workers directly from Atlantic Canada) to forms of self-organized migration in which the individuals involved planned and secured their own work and lodging out West, depending on the circumstances at hand.

which the notion of the temporary worker is labelled has represented a complex and unresolved challenge, the task of enumerating such temporary workers has remained even more so elusive.

Wood Buffalo Regional Municipality in the Oil Sands region expresses great interest in counting the numbers of temporary workers operating in the region. The primary motivating interest in enumerating mobile workers has been to access certain provincial funding offered to resource-based towns to deal with the additional stresses temporary populations place on local infrastructures and services since such numbers are not calculated in traditional population counts used to assess funding for municipalities based on population size (Aylward 2006). Meanwhile, the Oil Sands industry has also expressed interest in obtaining greater understandings of the demographics and mobility patterns of its immense and shifting labour force. Two central reports of note have been prepared regarding the Oil Sands region's temporary workers: one examining the "shadow populations" of Northern Alberta (Aylward 2006) and another contracted by the Oil Sands Developers' Group, which attempts to number and profile the "mobile construction workers" of the Oil Sands (Nicols 2007). In these two reports, the concentration has been solely on enumerating back-and-forth workers. Sojourners are essentially structural invisibilities in the population enumeration techniques and statistical analysis used while, without the use of more in-depth qualitative and ethnographic research, these individuals cannot be differentiated from other indeterminate workers or residents.

Aylward's 2006 report uses the term 'shadow population' to refer to temporary workers, with the term referencing such workers' invisibility in traditional forms of enumeration. Using work-camp population records and making use of available accommodations in the WBRM region as a population proxy (i.e.: hotel rooms, campgrounds and other forms of temporary accommodation used by mobile workers), the report estimates 11 779 mobile workers operating in the Oil Sands region in 2005. The second report (Nicols 2007) utilizes a slightly more complex methodology, reflecting the research consultants' affiliation with the Oil Sands Developers' Group which allowed extensive access to particular Oil Sands facility work-sites. A portion of mobile workers were surveyed at select job sites, with the results extrapolated to the general Oil Sands region population. The findings conclude that in the Oil Sands region, in 2006, 75 per cent of mobile construction workers were housed in work-camps, 18 per cent living in rented accommodations in Fort McMurray with a small minority temporarily residing in local campgrounds, hotels or who own their own accommodations in Fort McMurray. Furthermore, findings indicate that 52 per cent of mobile workers originated from Alberta outside of the WBRM region, 24 per cent from Atlantic Canada and 8 per cent from Nova Scotia specifically. As such, with 18 626 workers housed in work-camps at the time of the study, the report estimates a total of 24 311 mobile construction workers operating in the Oil Sands region in 2007, of which 5882 were from Atlantic Canada and 1925 from Nova Scotia. A similarity in both of these reports is that the authors substantially detail the methodological difficulties of enumerating a shifting and dynamic population of mobile workers. Both reports, having calculated an estimate of temporary workers in the

region, note that such difficulties led to the authors taking a conservative approach and estimates that are most likely lower than actual numbers of temporary workers operating in the region.[49]

Meanwhile, the WBRM Census offers longitudinal data on work-camp populations which, while excluding the significant numbers of temporary workers not housed in work-camps and temporary project accommodations, gives a general idea of the size, scope and growing numbers of temporary labour employed in the region. The most recent census notes that work-camp populations have steadily increased over the past decade, from a project accommodation[50] population of 5 903 in 2000, to 9 178 in 2005, to 26 284 in 2008 (WBRM Census 2010) but excludes, due to methodological difficulties, the numbers of temporary workers residing outside of the work-camp system. The census underlines that Fort McMurray's substantial grey-market of "illegal" or unlicensed room rentals in private residences thwarts traditional population assessment strategies, mentioning that recorded numbers of temporary workers are certainly an underestimate due to the high number of unreported boarders living in private residences (WBRM Census 2008).

---

[49] For instance, Aylward points out that "these data sources reflect a bare minimum in that the numbers collected do not capture other potential sources of information" (2006:19). Similarly, Nicols' estimates of 24 311 mobile workers in 2007 notes that their study was based on survey data from workers directly employed in oil sands-specific facilities and excluded a potentially substantial number of mobile workers employed in the Wood Buffalo region's residential and commercial construction workforce while also excluding temporary workers not employed directly in the construction workforce such as service workers and the kitchen aids, cooks and cleaners employed within the work-camp system itself.

[50] WBRM uses the term "project accommodation" to refer to the work-camp structures which house temporary workers

With these difficulties in enumeration identified, the first key detail to underline is that both the Aylward (2006) and Nicols (2007) reports and WBRM 2008 and 2010 census data conclude that, at any given point, from an admitted conservative and cautious frame of analysis, temporary, short-term workers constitute at least a quarter of the Oil Sands region's overall population.

A second identifiable key trend is that the numbers of temporary workers in the region is not only growing but is growing proportionally much faster than the population of indeterminate residents in the Oil Sands region. The WBRM census lists that the population of the region, excluding work-camp populations, grew from 39 279 in 1999 to 77 050 in 2008, a substantial near-doubling of the population in less than a decade. Yet, the work-camp population has grown much faster: in 1999, there was a work-camp population of 3 568 while this population grew to a population of 26 284 in 2008. To put these numbers in comparison, the residential population of WBRM grew by 96 per cent during this period. In the same period, the work-camp population grew by 737 per cent. This work-camp population dipped slightly in response to the economic downturn to 23 325 in 2010 but yet remained higher than the pre-economic downturn work-camp population of 18 572 in 2007 (WBRM 2010, 2008). In sum, the region of the Oil Sands is undeniably shaped by migration and such temporary workers make up a substantial and growing component of the social and physical landscape.

Sketching out an understanding of the numbers of workers travelling from Industrial Cape Breton to the Oil Sands region is equally if not more difficult than enumerating temporary workers operating in the Oil Sands. On one hand, the patterns of

migration between Industrial Cape Breton and the Oil Sands have had tremendous impact on everyday life and public consciousness on Cape Breton Island as a whole, with knowledge and familiarity of the "long-distance commute" widespread. Numerous sources agree that Industrial Cape Breton, with its high unemployment numbers and proportionally high numbers of unemployed skilled tradespeople, sends a large percentage of Nova Scotia's mobile workers to the Oil Sands region (ECBC 2009; Gibbs and Leech 2009; Morgan 2009; Nikiforuk 2009). Yet beyond numerous anecdotal accounts and lay estimations of the numbers of such mobile workers, very little reliable data has been collected regarding this route of labour migration and the numbers of individuals involved. Little data exists for internal interprovincial migration within Canada (Corbett 2007) and, unlike the case of Wood Buffalo Regional Municipality, there are no immediate financial motivations for the Cape Breton Regional Municipality to enumerate mobile workers.

As such, reliable empirical numbers of back-and-forth and sojourning movements to the Oil Sands from Industrial Cape Breton are relatively non-existent, while such numbers would fluctuate dramatically throughout the year and from year to year. The president of the Cape Breton Building Trades Council estimated that there were 1700 Cape Breton unionized tradespeople commuting to Alberta in 2005 (CBC 2006), growing to 2200 by 2008 (Pottie 2009), numbers which would exclude non-union workers, the sojourners who reside principally though temporarily in the Oil Sands region, and those who had transferred their union membership to an Albertan union yet continue to reside in the Cape Breton region. Yet, this estimate is still close to the overall (though

conservative) provincial estimate of 1925 workers in 2007 from Nova Scotia provided by Nicols 2007. Meanwhile, a report prepared for a Cape Breton regional economic development agency (ECBC 2009) which unfortunately suffers from a rather hazy methodology estimates that conservatively 4 per cent of the Cape Breton Island population worked off the Island in 2009 (roughly about 6 300 individuals). The report surmises that a large proportion (potentially upwards of 80 per cent or approximately 5 040) of such workers were or had been employed in the Oil Sands over the past several years. While exact numbers of those originating from Industrial Cape Breton involved in Oil Sands mobile labour patterns are unknown at this point, the numbers are large enough to have made substantial impacts on the area. In response to my question about how many people from Industrial Cape Breton are working in the Oil Sands, an employment counsellor in the Sydney Mines area summed up the widely held perspective that local involvement in such labour mobility is commonplace:

> Oh my gosh, it must be fifty percent! I'll see guys in the office, they'll see their buddy in the office and say, "Hey I haven't seen you in a year!" "Yep, been up in Fort Mac, working", they'll say. But I'd say about fifty, forty percent at least of the tradespeople here are up there working.

To conclude this section, several main points need to be underlined: separate migration streams have emerged between the Oil Sands and certain elsewheres with differences in spatial and temporal arrangements. While certain labour migrants engage in back-and-forth work patterns, others sojourn in the region in more indefinite working and living arrangements. Methodologies have been developed to enumerate the numbers of temporary workers in the area but they provide very rough and ultimately conservative estimates as to how many individuals participate in these patterns of migration. As such,

reliable quantitative figures as to the number of those taking part in this migration route require more development. Yet, the existing reports agree that the Oil Sands region hosts a large proportion of temporary workers and the trend is that the overall number of temporary workers and the ratio of temporary workers to permanent residents is increasing – showing an enduring and deepening reliance on industry on temporary labour. Meanwhile, a significant proportion of this temporary labour force originates from Atlantic Canada, with Industrial Cape Breton supplying a large number to this figure.

Maintaining migration from the receiving community

While the Oil Sands industry has grown to depend on increasingly large numbers of temporary labour for its ongoing maintenance and expansion, certain factors need to be present in order to allow for such migrations to emerge and persist. The following section identifies and explores factors within this receiving region which serve to connect workers from afar to temporary forms of labour, both in terms of the organization of work and through the organization of the reproduction of labour power.

In her discussion on the development of post-Fordism, Pollert notes that "the discovery of the 'flexible workforce'" becomes part of "an ideological offensive which celebrates pliability and casualization and makes them seem inevitable" (1988: 72). Similarly, Sennett notes how a defining feature of neoliberalism, or what he terms "the new capitalism", is the increasing reliance on short-term contracts, "projects" or "fields of work" (1998: 22) as contrasted with previous notions of secure, full-time and often

life-long employment. Within this new form of work organization with an emphasis on flexible accumulation and just-on-time delivery, the motto becomes "no long term" (1998:22) while such casualization of the labour force allows for easy expanding and shedding of workers and for greater flexibility for capital interests (Harvey 2010). Other writers have noted the new trend in the labour market of the "precariat" (Standing 2011, Molé 2010), those perpetually holding unstable and often mobile relations to labour. While historically, a cadre of workers has long existed on peripheries of capitalist labour markets, over the past three decades, deindustrialization and neoliberal restructuring have made such precarious work situations more common-place and for many, an anticipated aspect of the world of work (Harvey 2010: 242-244). Such themes are frequently repeated with the overwhelming consensus that neoliberalism as experienced "from the ground" makes long-term, secure employment a rare occurrence (Beck 1992; Ong 2006; Sassen 1998) as work becomes increasingly based on of contingent, contractual, temporary and project-based strategies of employment.

The Oil Sands industries' initial development in the 1960s and 1970s coincided with a period when neoliberal production and management strategies of just-on-time delivery, project-based organization structures, flexible work arrangements, along with increasingly antagonistic views towards organized labour were arising. From its early conception, neoliberal strategies of flexibility were incorporated into the designs and organizational structures of Oil Sands industries with such industries taking on, at least in part, a projects-based organization structure in which certain tasks are carried out by sub-contractors working on a temporary basis (Alberta 2010).

To expand on how this system of work organization functions: work within the Oil Sands industry can be broken up into two very large categories: construction and operations/maintenance.[51] Construction refers to, of course, the processes of building during industrial establishment and expansion and entails a wide range of work activities from the creation of access roads and pipelines to the construction of heavy industrial plants and extraction facilities (Alberta 2010). Included within construction activities would also be the creation of new strip-mine sites, which include clearing the forests and excavating the muskeg and the up to seventy-five meters of earth which lie above the bituminous deposits (a complex set of tasks referred to as "clearing the overburden").

Operations/maintenance refers to the post-construction period when the building of a particular project is complete and the facility is considered to be in the process of production. This includes all aspects of post-construction production work such as the mining of bituminous sands, the delivery of such sands to the industrial facilities for processing, the in-plant extraction of bitumen from bituminous sands and the day-to-day operations of the industrial facilities and mining sites. This category of work also includes the ongoing maintenance, repair and replacement of industrial machinery, infrastructure and equipment, along with non-industrial tasks of management and administration. Both categories require a large range and number of workers: trades people such as welders, carpenters, pipefitters, general labourers, heavy equipment

[51] This section is based on information obtained through interviews and conversations with various union leaders and members, employees and representatives of several oil sand consortiums, workers employed in various degrees with sub-contracting companies and within the larger oil sands companies.

operators, millwrights as well as, at a level removed from the direct industrial labour process, technologists, engineers, management and administration staff (Alberta 2010).

The first category, construction, is principally undertaken by exterior sub-contracting companies tasked to carry out and complete a project or certain aspect of a larger project. For instance, the construction of an oil sands facility may have several sub-contracting firms responsible for different elements of construction—erecting the scaffolds which serve as platforms for other construction activities, laying pipelines, the pouring of concrete—along with the other myriad tasks included in creating the physical structures of a resource extraction and processing industrial facility. Such projects can endure several weeks or several years depending on their complexity.

The category of construction, with its relatively definitive start-dates and completion dates, can be ostensibly seen as an inherently temporary form of work and hence necessitating a projects-based organizational structure. The same cannot be said of the second category of ongoing maintenance/operations. Such continuous work is rather further split into "ongoing operations" assigned to full-time, indeterminate employees and "maintenance projects" subcontracted to outside firms on a contingent basis. Yet what tasks are defined as either a part of ongoing operations or a temporary "project" is ambiguous and will shift from company to company and over time within the same company, while certain contracting firms hold "rotating contracts" to perpetually provide the same sets of labour skills on a continuously temporary basis.

The line between what is considered a temporary construction project versus ongoing maintenance becomes blurred. This is partly due to the fact that while the oil

sands facilities are in a constant state of construction and expansion, they are also in a constant state of repair and replacement, either through upgrading of pre-existing equipment or through the replacement of equipment subject to wear.

This ambiguous division of ongoing operations and temporary projects can be best described through an example: Bituminous sands, containing high amounts of silica and other abrasive materials, are notoriously destructive to extraction and processing equipment. One of the main technological obstacles to developing the oil sands was overcoming the abrasiveness of the sands during excavation and transportation. Early attempts in the 1960s and 1970s at using dragline excavators and conveyor belts to extract and transport bitumen for processing were stymied by the friction produced through the digging of the sands from the earth, with the thick steel teeth of digging buckets quickly worn down to nothing over several hours of digging (Pratt 1976; *cf.* Maugh 1978). Methods of extraction and delivery have changed over the past decades. Currently, a commonly used system is to extract the sands from strip mines via electric excavators. Gigantic dump trucks capable of loads of up to four hundred tonnes then deliver the bituminous sands to large crushing stations. Ore crushers grind and break down the large clumps of earth and mix them with water to create a bituminous sand "slurry" which is then transported via pipeline to the processing plants. Yet while these specialized electric excavators, gigantic dump-trucks and systems of pipelines have replaced draglines, bucket-wheel excavators and conveyor belts, issues of abrasiveness continue to present a challenge. During a visit to one of the industrial sites, a company representative explained to me how the kilometres of pipelines which transport

bituminous slurry to the processing facilities are constantly being worn down by the abrasiveness of the sands to the extent that one ton of metal is literally worn off the interior of a single facility's pipelines every day. As such, these pipelines are in a constant process of replacement, with such replacement requiring ongoing efforts of various work crews of welders, pipefitters, scaffolders, general labourers and so on. Yet, one company may classify pipeline replacement as an act of ongoing maintenance, holding a bank of permanent employees to undertake this continuous act of replacement while another company will frame this activity as sets of temporary projects, retaining sub-contractors and rotations of temporary workers on revolving contracts to intermittently carry out such repairs. Pipeline replacement represents just one small element of the industrial production process in the oil sands which may, according to management decisions, be defined as either an ongoing task or a collection of short-term projects.[52]

Yet the definition of what constitutes an element of ongoing operations or a series of projects change within the same company over time. For instance, while living in Fort McMurray, one of my roommates had been working for a number of months at one of the major industrial sites, employed by a sub-contractor who held a rotating contract to upgrade and maintain the facility's electrical system. In what seemed to be an arbitrary decision, this particular company announced that the maintenance of that facility's

[52] The perpetual replacement of the Oil Sands facilities often reminded me of the metabolic processes associated with an organic being, constantly in the act of slowly breaking down and being repaired. It also reminded me of Abraham Lincoln's mythical axe which was said to have lasted him his entire life, although he had to replace the head twice and the handle three times.

electrical system would be redefined as an ongoing operation carried out by the company's own electricians rather than project-based. The sub-contractor's contract was quickly dissolved and my roommate found himself unceremoniously unemployed.

The consequence is to create something of a maze-like system of sub-contractors employing shifting numbers of temporary workers to carry out a variety of "projects" and contracts of varying lengths. Workers often find themselves working on projects or contacts of several months or several years in length, working each time with new co-workers, new employers and new and typically unfamiliar industrial sites while such contracts often hold a degree of unpredictability in terms of length which further demands a certain amount of worker flexibility. Tom, for instance, describes his last project out West:

> Well, what they'll do is say on the phone they need so many guys and that the job is four months plus. That could turn into a year. They don't know, they're just hoping they can get it done by then. Or they'll say, "It's completed. We have more work over here, would you like to come work over here?" Or you sign up for it and it turns out to be three months. That's what happened last time. I was happy with that. I went out for just a shut-down and they came in and said, "Alright, do you want to stay on with us?" And I said, "Yeah". I signed myself on. I miss my family but yeah, I'll sign on. "What am I looking at?" "Oh, you're looking at six weeks." And it was basically six weeks, so more money in my pocket. Summer's rolling around, so the kids will be off school, so I'll make some extra cash beforehand.

Meanwhile such forms of temporary work feed into hegemonic processes and come to take on commonsensical elements, with the division of trades-work in the Oil Sands becoming a logical consequence of the presence of tasks which have ostensibly clear spans of time between start and completion. It could be argued that construction work—and the maintenance work which could also be defined as construction work—is

by its very nature a temporary form of employment as it entails the creation and eventual termination of a specific project. Yet, temporary work is not a necessary or unavoidable component of the Oil Sands arrangements of labour but one which, I argue, has been allowed due to the needs of capital for flexibility in the workforce to allow for rapid periods of contraction and expansion within the industry. While a particular construction project may have a short life-span in terms having definitive commencement and completion dates, the sheer amount of ongoing construction projects planned into the future suggests that such work need not necessarily entail temporary workers.

Pointing in this direction, in the Mobile Construction Worker report I mention above, consultants carrying out the research project recorded their surprise at the sheer numbers of temporary workers in the Oil Sands construction industry, noting with a certain amount of astonishment that in one of the study's on-site surveys of 1120 workers, only 38 of such workers were found to be "local" or non-mobile workers (Nicols 2007:14). This causes the report's author to question why did such workers not relocate to the area "after the oil sands had been in an expansion phase for over a decade and with expectations of continued high levels of construction activity for the next five years of more" (Nicols 2007:14). Interestingly, the report poses such mobility in terms of individual choice, and is mute on the role of industry in perpetuating such work arrangements through the division of work into sub-contracted projects. The system of sub-contractors is allowed for and perpetuates the presence of migrant labour – allowing industry the flexibility needed for rapid expansions and contractions in the local work force.

Temporary Accommodations for Temporary Workers: The Work-camp

To underscore themes raised in the previous chapter, the particular origins of the Oil Sands work-camp system coincides with a period when both industry and government were leery of creating Fordist-style single-industry communities while neoliberal approaches to accessing and utilizing temporary labour as an alternative to permanent residency was on the rise (Russell 1999). The "company town" model, in which a single employer owns, manages and controls the majority of institutions and functions of a town, was a preferred method of obtaining and securing labour in the late 1880s up to the post-World War II period (Lucas 1971; White 2012). Yet, by the late 1960s, a definitive shift away from the company town model was widespread throughout North America. Single-industry towns were deemed expensive for industry to construct, maintain and manage while the threat of industry collapse underscored the potential for creating ghost towns. Over the course of the 1950s to late 1970s, most Canadian "company towns" became "public towns", downloading the costs and responsibilities of administrating such single-industry towns onto local governance structures (Lucas 1971; Russell 1999; White 2012).

While corporate interests began developing lean and flexible production techniques (Harvey 1990; 2005) and governments became less willing to support the establishment of single-industry towns in remote areas (Lucas 1971; Russell 1999), certain technological changes such as larger and faster air transport and more efficient communications networks to coordinate such work organizations (Harvey 1990; Storey 2009) led to mining operations throughout Canada coming to heavily rely on some form

of commute work (Storey 2010; Russell 1999). The oil and gas industry developed the use of temporary workforces through initiating the "fly-in, fly out" model in the Gulf of Mexico oil and gas industry, in which employees were (and still are) shunted between the mainland and sea-based industrial resource exploitation projects on rotating shifts (Higgins 2005; Storey 2009). This model became increasingly wide-spread, being adapted for Newfoundland off-shore oil drilling in the 1980s as well as mining operations in remote areas of Australia (Storey and Shrimpton 1986; Storey 2009, 2010). Such techniques spread to other resource extraction industries, with Canada's uranium industry in northern Saskatchewan developing systems of production based on shifting workforces of temporary workers (Russell 1999). This switch from the "new town" model to the "no town" model (Storey 2009) created "radically spatialized" industrial relations (Russell 1999) in which workers saw a strict and definitive geographic and temporal division between home life and work life while becoming connected to new forms of industrial work without permanent relocation from their home communities.

In terms of Oil Sands development, early plans to create a single-industry town to house incoming workers were dismissed by both government planners and by industry (Alberta 1980). During a period when oil did not enjoy the hegemonic status as a central and valuable energy source which it currently holds, both provincial and federal governments wanted to avoid the possible consequences in investing in the infrastructure of a community that could fail in the event of capital flight, while the main companies developing the Oil Sands region during this period, Suncor and Syncrude, were leery of taking on the financial and administrative duties associated with a single-industry town

(Alberta 1980; Pratt 1976). While oil sands companies were successful in externalizing certain costs of accommodating a workforce by placing the onus for building town infrastructure on the province of Alberta and later on the Municipality of Wood Buffalo, the rapid need for a massive workforce for initial construction prompted industry to adopt a dual model of worker accommodations consisting of indeterminate employees housed in the developing town of Fort McMurray along with temporary workers housed in a growing work-camp system (Alberta 1980; Pratt 1976).

I have noted above the rather dramatic increase of temporary worker populations housed in work-camps in the Oil Sands region and such temporary accommodations have been pivotal in allowing the region to become a receiving region for temporary labour on the present scale. As the need for temporary labour increased, the size and complexity of the dormitories used to house such workers increased as well. While such work-camps began as modest temporary Atco-style trailers, Syncrude constructed the first "modern work-camp" in the early 1970s, a 700-person complex containing dormitories, cafeteria and leisure facilities (Depuis 1976). Over the course of the past fifteen years such work-camps have grown into multi-wing institutions capable of holding thousands of temporary workers at any given time. The populations of work-camps give an indication that these project accommodations have grown to the extent that they now are essentially the equivalent of towns and villages of temporary workers[53].

[53] The Oil Sands Developers Group conducted a census of work-camp accommodations in 2008 (OSDG 2008). As noted below, many of these project accommodations have populations equivalent to a village or small town. The names, operators and populations of the larger work-camps included in the census are:

The work-camps go beyond simply providing temporary accommodations. They also free such temporary workers from the mundane activities associated with the reproduction of labour. It has been strongly underlined that migrant labour is useful not predominantly because it supplies "cheap" labour and not only because it externalises the costs of the reproduction of labour (Burawoy 1976), but, and perhaps more centrally, because it procures flexible bodies willing to work when required (Basok 2003; Higgins 2005). In a work-camp, a worker's attention and energies are "freed" from non-productive social and family obligations and connections and can be applied solely to productive work. Donald, for instance, explains that when he is at home, he enjoys a balanced life consisting of spending time with his wife, visiting his children and playing with his three-year old granddaughter. Yet, when working out West, the lack of social commitments and absence of leisure activities found in the work-camp makes the long hours of work not an arduous prospect but rather a welcome and preferable alternative to the boredom and isolation of the work-camps:

> You work hard, you get a day off here and there. I'd rather work there, seven days a week. Straight-through if I had the choice. Rather than having any time off. There's not much more to do than watch TV and do your laundry. The worst thing that can happen is to have three days off, because you don't got nothing to do.

- Poplar Point, Cheltick Lodge and McKay Lodge (Canadian Natural Resources): 8 259 workers
- Albian Village (Shell): 2 344
- Millennium Lodge (Suncor): 1 957
- Mildred Lake Lodge (Syncrude): 1 500
- Wapasu Lodge (PTI): 1 400
- Borealis Lodge (Suncor): 1 415
- Firebag Camp (Suncor): 1 291
- Athabasca Lodge (PTI): 1 200
- Beaver River Lodge (PTI): 600

While the work-camp system is a very explicit example of how the region comes to emerge and persist as a receiving region for temporary labour, the extensive grey-market rental system in Fort McMurray has received scant attention in its role in providing temporary accommodations. With housing and apartment rental costs exceptionally high and an official rental vacancy rate near or approaching zero (WBRM Census 2008), a common occurrence in Fort McMurray is for home owners to rent out rooms to either commute workers or sojourners. These temporary lodgings provide something of a safety valve for temporary labour accommodations in the region, absorbing workers who are either unable to secure accommodations in work-camps and who would otherwise be deterred by the high costs of official rentals in the area or, in times of expansion, providing additional accommodations for workers when there is insufficient space within the work-camp system. Meanwhile, for many residents of Fort McMurray, renting out several rooms in one's house is the only way to realize homeownership in a region notorious for having the highest cost of living in Canada.[54] At the same time, the population of temporary workers are marked as ideal renters. As individuals only in the region to work, they are less likely to see their rented lodgings as a social nexus or a place of leisure in the same way a traditional boarder may and, with long work-hours the norm for such temporary workers, they are typically absent from their lodging for a majority of time. One of the seven hundred and fifty similar listings

[54] As of May 2011, for instance, the average monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Fort McMurray was $1 727 and the average price of a single-family home was a staggering $729 596 compared to the Canadian national average of $367 500 (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 2011).

renting out grey market apartments on a Fort McMurray classified listings website on July 11 2010 exemplifies how such temporary workers are typically targeted as renters:

> ROOM FOR RENT
> Available NOW. Room has double bed, dresser, night stand, mini fridge, cable TV with internet. Shared bathroom with one other guy. Commuters preferred. $600 for the rest of the month and then $1000 after that.

Such "illegal rentals"—in terms that such rentals are unregulated, untaxed and unlicensed—have been noted and recognized as widespread by municipalities (WMRM 2010) yet no attempts have been made to regulate such activities, signalling an unspoken official recognition that this "illicit" activity is accepted as a necessary element in housing a substantial portion of the temporary population.

During my period in the region, I lived in two residences, each which had rented all available bedrooms and had constructed additional bedrooms in the basements. In the first residence, all of the renters considered themselves as part of the "sojourner" group, in the midst of arrangements in which they saw themselves working in the region for periods from six months to two years before either paying off accumulated debts or saving up enough money to begin a new phase of life elsewhere. The homeowners, a couple from Cape Breton, considered themselves long-term semi-permanent residents, having bought the house as part of a ten-year plan to work in Fort McMurray before returning "home". In my second residence, two friends from New Brunswick had come out with plans to work in the area for two months while their sojourn had unexpectedly grown to two years. Both considered their stays temporary but did not know when they would eventually leave. Another was a "back-and-forther" living in the house three

weeks out of the month while returning home to Nova Scotia one week monthly. A forth roommate was an anomaly, as out of the majority of people I spoke with in Fort McMurray, she was one of the few who had planned to settle permanently in Fort McMurray, had found full-time employment with an Oil Sands company and was saving for an eventual house purchase.

Meanwhile, as with temporary workers as a whole, estimating the numbers of such workers housed in the grey-market rental system has proven difficult for researchers. Given the unregulated nature of their temporary residences, they have remained, from an enumerator's perspective, essentially invisible. While drawing attention to Nicols' 2007 study once more, the researchers estimated that nearly 25 per cent of mobile construction workers are housed in Fort McMurray which numbered over six thousand workers at the time of the study. While the study did not differentiate between those who were renting legal apartments versus grey-market rooms, the conservative numbers reported do point out to the potential size of this rental population and points out that this market has tremendous abilities to absorb and accommodate the "overflow" of labour from work-camps, particularly in boom times when space within the work-camps is scarce and at a premium.

Although outside the scope of this present dissertation, the presence of a number of temporary workers in Fort McMurray has undoubtedly had various impacts on the region, placing stresses on urban planning initiatives forced to plan infrastructures for an unknown and shifting population and a strain on the creation of sentiments of community

in the region. Aylward's study of such impacts caused by the presence of temporary workers summarises such circumstances:

> Hand-in-hand with the economic costs incurred in hosting a shadow population, is the impact a shadow population can have on a community's well-being. A shadow population, by definition, does not "own" the community. Research has indicated that a community with a high shadow population relative to the number of permanent residents is at risk for increasing social problems such as crime rates and substance abuse. One of the fundamental elements identified as being the cause of the increased risk incurred is the decrease in "social cohesion" of the community...It is necessary to acknowledge that Northern Alberta needs and benefits from the flux of transient workers in the current economic boom (2006: 8).

In order for a region to emerge as a receiving site for migrant and temporary forms of labour, a substantial amount of work on various levels must be enacted and achieved. In terms of the Oil Sands one of the few avenues to circumvent the rigidities of Fordism for a neoliberalized industry with Fordist characteristics comes through applying practices of flexibility to the organization of the labour force. While enumerating these shifting and dynamic populations has proven a challenge, the oil sands industries have made migrant and temporary labour a structural necessity of the industry while such reliance has grown in size and in proportion to the total workforce as the oil sands industry expanded throughout the late 1990s and most of the 2000s. The region of the Oil Sands is exceptionally shaped by migration with temporary migration increasingly engrained in the social and physical landscape.

Such temporary workers have been recruited or originated from various deindustrialized region as workers expelled from previous relations of production come to be incorporated as reserve labour available to be accessed for oil sands production with

one such site being Industrial Cape Breton. Such systems of migrant labour are supported by various factors including the sub-contracting system and interconnected work-camp and grey-market rental systems of worker accommodation. Concomitantly, the division of work into discrete projects of indeterminate length is incorporated into hegemonic process as the various tasks contributing to oil sands production come to be seen as intrinsically temporary and thus necessitating temporary workers.

Chapter Five

Work-Camps and Their Discontents: Technologies towards the Creation of Neoliberal Subjectivities

I'm sending you this picture. My home sweet home. For the people that can't imagine how huge some camps are. A little village in itself. People call it the prison with no bars. Not much green grass.

-Ann (personal communication May 1st 2011)

A recent article in an oil and gas trade magazine discusses the size, scope and sophisticated nature of Northern Alberta's work-camp system, offering a glowing description of one such newly constructed work-camp capable of housing several thousand temporary workers:

> The facility represents the highest evolution of the work-camp. The all-inclusive development delivers superior quality of life by offering the type of big-city amenities not usually associated with work-camps. It boasts an indoor ice hockey rink, a baseball field, gymnasium, running track, weight room, games room, computer room, sitting areas with couches and sofas, a corner store, pub, a Tim Horton's outlet, a cafeteria that feels more like a restaurant and a snack room where you can grab a sandwich, fruit and drink any time of day or night free of charge or brown-bag a lunch for the next day. All these facilities are interconnected by enclosed walkways to hotel-style residences which feature furnished rooms with wall-to-wall carpeting, a flat-panel television, a double bed, desk, sofa, night table, coffee table and private or semi-private bathrooms. The management wing gets the private bathrooms (Stanstny 2008).

Such public descriptions present work-camps as offering comfortable accommodations and ostensibly an overall high quality of life. Yet these descriptions typically bracket off the personal context of life in such facilities, where shelter, food, basic services and the opportunity for leisure is provided but where workers contend with being separated from family, friends and community for extended periods of time in order to provide their labour to the oil and gas industry. In emphasizing the sophisticated natures of this "new stage" of work-camp neither do such descriptions acknowledge that these project accommodations are principally intended as a new technology for delivering and maintaining an exceptionally large and flexible workforce for the flexible needs of a neoliberal industry.

The lived experiences related by those who live in such camps uncover what these public descriptions ignore. Despite their capacity to deliver the creature comforts of life, these modern work-camps still entail a dramatic separation between one's home life and one's work life in which neoliberalized forms of diffused control of workers and management techniques converge to transform worker subjectivities. Moreover, in providing the basic needs for the renewal of a workforce, work-camps represent new

forms of commodifying reproductive labour and creating gendered streams of labour migration between the Oil Sands and various elsewheres. In sum such camps operate as new technologies aimed towards realizing certain idealized neoliberal working subjects. Yet subjects do not automatically conform to new subjectivities without critique, resistance or recognition.

Ann, whose experiences of living and working in a large-scale modern work-camp over several years will be explored below, offers a counter-point to the positive perspective of work-camps depicted above:

> It plays with your head. I don't know, you miss home. Your friends are home, your family's home. And you're in the middle of the 'boonies'...A lot of people call it prison. Even the men, they call it prison. "I did my time", they'll say. But that's what they call it. They say the only thing missing is the bars on the windows.

Before continuing, a brief summary of certain points made up to now are in order: Firstly, the Oil Sands industry as a true industrial and profit-making endeavour originally began in the early 1970s with the intentions to utilize a dual system of labour accommodations, developing the town of Fort McMurray into a service centre for incoming workers while using temporary project accommodations or work-camps to house temporary and transitory labour forces for various construction and expansion work within the Oil Sands industry and to provide spill-over accommodations for full-time workers as housing in Fort McMurray developed. During this period, two broad forms of work-camp emerged. Temporary accommodations such as mobile trailers were used to locate comparatively small workforces near work-sites for relatively short or seasonal work projects, typically installed and utilized for a number of weeks or months. This type of mobile housing has

been relatively common in certain construction and oil and gas industries and has precursors in the railroad construction industry (Storey 2009, 2010; Russell 1999; Bradwin 1972).

The second form of work-camps are larger, more permanent complexes which are more akin to institutions such as hospitals, university residences or the comparison most favoured by informants such as Ann, prisons. While the former is meant to house temporary workers numbering in the single digits to the dozens, such "modern work-camps" are meant to house hundreds or thousands of workers on a temporary yet perpetually permanent basis. These modern work-camps, some of which are owned by particular oil sands companies, others by firms which contract out their services, represent a core system to house larger numbers and percentages of the transitory workforce and the overall general workforce in the Oil Sands. As has been explored in detail in the previous chapter but yet bears underlining, while the non-transitory population of the Oil Sands region of Wood Buffalo Regional Municipality has grown substantially during the "boom years", nearly doubling in size from 39 279 in 1999 to 77 050 in 2008 (a growth rate of nearly a hundred per cent), in the same period, the work-camp population has grown from 3 568 in 1999 to 26 284 in 2008, a massive population increase of 737 per cent (WBRM 2008, 2010). This increase in work-camp population emphasises industry's continued and growing reliance on temporary labour while the creation and entrenchment of the modern work-camp system establishes temporary migration increasingly part of the social and physical landscape.

The modern work-camp of the Oil Sands industries is markedly different than the short-term, temporary and mobile housing of other temporary worker lodgings. Rather, it serves as a new technology of not only worker acquisition but also worker acquiescence. Arguably, a similar situation could be found in the migrant labour systems in the South African mining industry as analysed by Burawoy (1976) in which male mine workers from surrounding and distant villages were housed in complexes and compounds in order to supply labour to mine sites. Russell, in his discussion of the developing work-camps of Northern Saskatchewan's uranium mining industry, also recognises similar parallels between African migrant labour systems and Canadian work-camps, yet found that such comparisons exist on a superficial level only. Russell notes that Northern Canadian work-camps lack the capacity for the emergence of community as seen in the family compounds surrounding the males-only compounds of the South African migrant labour system as well as the ensuing capacity for paternal community control on the part of a unilateral company. Meanwhile, unions provide at least a weak counter-balance to the unilateral powers of the companies as described by Burawoy (Russell 1999:71-73). I agree with Russell's assertion and add that the Canadian work-camp context also lacks the explicit acts of political and state coercion explained in Burawoy's migrant labour system analysis but also in the degree of spatial distance.

Rather, I posit the modern work-camp as primarily a new technology designed to impose and achieve certain tenets of neoliberalism upon a working force: mainly, expectations that workers ought to be mobile, flexible and individualised. The corollary to mobile, flexible individualized workers and idealized workers is that an idealized

neoliberal workforce has no requirements of non-productive social relations – family, friends and community are absent in calculations of ideal neoliberal agents who, rather than being defined as social beings, come to be understood as "infinitely portable, unencumbered economic agents" (Amit 2002: 25). Yet, industry requires labour which is only mobile to a degree. Capital requires assurances in terms of the stability of labour power for purposes of production and attempts to transform mobile labour to captive labour through a host of mechanisms and processes (Harvey 2010). Work-camps operate as technologies not only of control but also of transformation, so that workers come to see the particular relations to work engendered by life in the camp as normalized and commonsensical. Incorporating yet moving beyond the technologies of discipline which use regulation (Foucault 1995 [1975]), administration (Rose *et al* 2006) and other methods of cameralistic control (Schrauwers 2011), the modern work-camp serves as a site where such neoliberal subjectivities can be applied and realized.

The creation of such subjectivities is tied into surrounding processes of hegemony. Sider reminds us, for instance, that what he terms "hegemonic culture" serves to normalize the labour process and particular forms of production, moving such relations away from the spheres of articulation and critique (1980). Burawoy, likewise, spells out that the labour process is not isolated onto itself but rather an aspect of production regimes structured through the political organization of relations of production (1985; *cf.* Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:23).

The impacts of neoliberal logic on worker subjectivity have been detailed in several works. Sennett's discussion of the changing conditions of work and the

consequences of such changes on workers' "character" or consciousness, deserve to be looked at. His descriptions of late capitalism fall in line with Harvey's descriptions of flexible accumulation (1990) and Harvey's and others' descriptions of the tenets of neoliberalism (Harvey 2005; Ong 2006, 2007; Pupo and Thomas 2010) that are characterised mainly by the concept of flexibility: by the flexibility of capital to relocate, to restructure and subcontract, to subscribe to just-in-time production techniques and to downsize and dismiss workers to best fit its needs. Workers, for their part, must adapt to or adopt these creeds of flexibility and such adoptions and adaptations have differing effects on individuals depending on their class position. Sennett notes that "Davos Man", the archetypal corporate executive thrives in this demanded environment of flexibility and exploits the capacities which accompany flexibility. Yet, when the same expectations and adoption of neoliberal tenets occurs for those lower on the socio-economic scale, the same traits come to "corrode the character of more ordinary employees who try to play by these rules" (1998:63) while the "irreversible change and multiple, fragmented activity may be comfortable for the new regime's masters...but it may disorient the new regime's servants (1998:117).

In the geographical area of Southeast Asia, Ong further refines our understanding of how neoliberal logics resonate with and impact upon local formations of identity and self-hood. Through an exploration of conceptions of citizenship, Ong considers the role of governance as an instrument of state adaptation to market pressures and identity formation. The state plays a role in the creation of "valuable citizens" (2007: 219-239; 2006) who accept the neoliberal tenets of individualism, creativity and

entrepreneurialism. As Ong explains, "traditional" values come to be aligned with neoliberal notions of individuality and national belonging which are in turn repurposed to align with neoliberal expectations with individual identities being promoted over community or "traditional" identities, effectively demobilizing sources of identification which lie outside of state control.

Similar to Sennett, Ong notes through her use of flexible citizenship how class comes to be experienced in and through this neoliberal logic. Individuals with the proper "human capital" can enjoy citizen-like rights in a variety of national locations while those who enjoy less mobility and recognized skills come to be denied typical citizenship rights, exemplified through the image of the domestic maid who is denied worker protections and security.

Both Sennett and Ong observe how neoliberal logics strive to remake subjects by imposing the necessities of flexibility and individuality as crucial elements of subjectivity. Sennett proposes that neoliberal logic is applied to the general population through broad economic restructurings while Ong underlines the role of the state in assuring that individuals take part in such formations. Along these lines, I set out the work-camp as a technology which has similar aims to shape a particular stratum of the Canadian population to become flexible units of labour willing to provide labour when needed and to leave once this demand has passed. This technology similarly serves to bracket off concerns which lie outside of productive relations by treating and expecting individuals to behave not as social beings but as unencumbered productive units while additionally seizing upon and exaggerating certain pre-existing social divisions,

combining and commodifying both "male" productive work and "female" reproductive work in a neoliberal equivalent of the company town and a neoliberalized essientialization of "home". Yet I question how neoliberal aims come to be translated into neoliberal realities: to what extent do such techniques come to be incorporated, resisted or reacted against during one's experiences with such technologies?

As such, the goals for this chapter are as follows: The first section of this chapter has introduced the work-camp system and introduced the idea that the modern work-camp is a relatively new and novel technology aimed at securing labour and instilling a particular neoliberal subjectivity. In the second section I aim to present modern work-camps as a shift away from the company town model to a neoliberal "no town" model rather than a continuation of superficially similar migrant labour systems by examining popular tropes which serve to conceal the work-camps' neoliberal logics. The third section will then explore the narrative of a worker who has had a sustained experience living and working within the modern work-camp system. Ann has been a kitchen helper in a modern work-camp for a number of years and as she will explain, working in the work-camps has required a rearticulating of her own identity as a worker, along with the consequences which this new defining of self entails. The final section will examine the consequences of a new technology designed to secure labour and impact upon worker subjectivity in order to shape workers into ideal units of labour.

Work-Camp Tropes

Industry reports, oil and gas trade magazines, along with rather uncritical media coverage which borrows too liberally from such reports, provide industry insiders and the general public with certain images and descriptions of the work-camp situations of the oil sands. Such images involve several popular reoccurring and interconnected tropes. The first is that modern work-camps offer workers a high quality of life that ostensibly borders on luxury. The second point follows from the first and sets up a contrast between modern work-camps and former work-camps of past industries in which the modern work-camps are described as offering workers an improved quality of life over that found in work-camps of past eras. The logical conclusion proposed through these tropes is that modern work-camps are an evolution beyond previous work-camps. This posits the modern work-camp as the latest stage of a Canadian heritage of mobile worker accommodations and as such something which has historical precedent as a long-standing element of resource exploration on Canada's frontier. Collectively, these tropes serve to obscure that modern work-camps exist as new neoliberal technologies which represent a marked shift in relations between workers and capital and not the suggested improved progression that such tropes proclaim.

A large number of articles in public newspapers and trades magazines underline that in order to attract workers to work in the Oil Sands, companies offer rather comfortable accommodations and certain advantages not typically found in the construction and oil and gas industries with much print being made of the free room and

board and access to leisure activities that such workers receive in their project accommodations. Headlines proclaim that "Oilsands work-camps offer first-class digs" (Canwest 2006) while proclaiming that "Roughnecks get maids" (Bloomberg 2007). The comfortable conditions that workers enjoy in such work-camps are underlined by mentioning that workers have a "free private room, maid service and five-course meals" (Bloomberg 2007) while other articles explains that a room in a work-camp is "kind of like a bachelor pad" (CanWest 2006).

Interestingly, there is a long-standing history of such positive depictions of oil sands work-camp conditions in public print. Three decades prior to the articles cited above, in month of February 1976, newspapers across Canada ran a series of articles which served to promote work and life in the Oil Sands with the apparent goal to raise the profile of the new industry and to attract new workers to venture to the Northern Albertan industries. The series was distributed through the Canadian Press under various titles such as: "No feeling of remoteness at Alberta Syncrude Camp" (*Montreal Gazette* 1976), "Syncrude Project: Good Pay, Single Rooms with Maid" (*Windsor Star* 1976) and "Life is pretty good at the Syncrude Camp" (*Leader-Post* 1976). The article served to promote the newly constructed Syncrude work-camp and loudly proclaimed with a liberal dose of sexism that the 700-person camp included a tavern, a games room with pool tables and table tennis and a room dedicated to showing weekly movies while for workers,

> All of them have single rooms in modern bunk houses which feature maid service – that is rooms are cleaned and beds made every day. And there are girls – lots of them, in hard hats and overalls, driving earth loaders, welding boiler plates, helping surveyors and doing security work. One is foreman of an all-male labour gang. Life is pretty good at the Syncrude camp.

The second trope is that as such, these work-camps represent a progression or an evolution on former forms of mobile worker accommodation. This trope places the roots of the modern-day work-camps in the over-turned birch-bark canoes that fur-traders used as shelter along the same Athabasca River (*Oil and Gas Inquirer* 2010) while underlining that the nature of resource exploitation along the edges of the frontier has previously necessitated Spartan styles of mobile accommodation, such as the mobile trailers drug by bull-dozers through the Northwest Territories by drilling rig teams in the 1970s (Bloomberg 2007). This second trope underlines the harsh and crowded conditions found within the bunk-houses of the past which housed workers in northern logging and mining industries, setting up a contrast to the improved conditions of the present, through depictions of the former crowded sleeping quarters and shared showers (Bloomberg 2007), mentioning that "almost no traces of bygone worker barracks' bunk-bed dormitories and gang bathrooms show in the new standard set by oil sands projects" (Canwest 2006). One article notes how the modern-day camps have done away with the "drafty trailers and communal showers of a decade ago" and "are giving way to resort-style housing that includes private room" (Bloomberg 2007).

These tropes establish an unearned heritage to a specific form of Canadian past while obscuring its actual basis in the present. By establishing connections to images of the Canadian frontier, they underline that work-camps are a necessary element of working in the frontier of resource exploitation. Yet, these tropes underline that contemporary work-camps are thus markedly different than previous work-camps and are a marked improvement, even an evolution on the concept of the work-camp. The

contemporary work-camps offer humane conditions which more than meet workers' needs for creature comforts. Taken as a total, these tropes begin to paint a general overall picture. Work-camps have been an enduring feature of the Canadian economy and have been a defining feature of life on the edge of the frontier and a necessary feature of such forms of resource exploitation. While work-camps of the past have presented workers with relatively deprived and basic living conditions, contemporary work-camps are civilized and comfortable; the Oil Sands work-camps represent a progressive evolution in temporary worker accommodations, taking into account the full range of needs of workers. Such work-camps thus are natural, necessary and while drawing on a historical connection, an improvement of previous forms of temporary accommodation. Meanwhile such tropes implicitly suggest that mobile labour is a style of work organization with a long tradition that does not require questioning.

Such reports then commonly contain an element which stands as a contradiction. In setting up the work-camp as an improvement and a progression from earlier forms of mobile worker accommodations, these articles also point out a marked difference in the contemporary work-camps to those of the past; that is, their relative permanency. While such reports draw a heritage connection between the mobile over-turned canoes of fur-traders, the bunk-house trailers pulled through the tundra by oil-drilling outfits and the temporary Atco-style mobile trailers of recent years in the Oil Sands themselves and used in other temporary projects of resource extraction, much note is made of the fact that these contemporary work-camps are a much more enduring feature of the Oil Sands landscape. The new working conditions are not a just temporary response to labour

shortages that employers plan to dismantle when "competition for skilled trades personnel tapers off". Rather such camps are noted as "permanent features" in the planned decades-long life of the Oil Sands megaprojects (Canwest 2006).

I argue that indeed, the work-camps of the Oil Sands do have a historical legacy to draw upon within the Canadian political economic context but not from the work-camps of the past. While certain key comparisons are made between the Oil Sands work-camps and the mobile accommodations of past workers, certain key features are erased, namely, the length of time of such projects, the length of time such workers are anticipated to work at a specific site and the number of workers partaking in such a work-project. An oil-well drilling team in the Arctic would hold a contract of several weeks at best while even a longer-term construction project requiring temporary labour would be measured in months or a few years at most. Such projects consisted of relatively small work teams – a large drilling team may have a dozen workers on a shift at one time. In contrast, the Oil Sands industries are not structured in such short terms but rather as ongoing megaprojects scheduled to continue indefinitely into the future (Nicols 2007) while the workforce of temporary workers constitutes the equivalent of a small city with estimates varying from 25 to 30 000 temporary workers employed annually over the past few years (WBRM 2008, 2010). Meanwhile, many temporary workers in the Oil Sands plan their mobile careers to be indefinite as well, measured in years rather than months or weeks.

While certain tropes establish the historical connections between the contemporary work-camps and those of past industry such similarities are not evident. A

connection I have pointed out in an earlier chapter serves to point out a different historical connection – that the contemporary project accommodations do not owe their legacy to the work-camps of the past but rather that such work-camps are the neoliberal equivalent to Fordist-era single-industry company towns. Such camps are not evolutions from former temporary work-camps but represent an element of the shift from Fordist to neoliberal ways of organizing the workforce and represent a fundamental shift in industrial relations to the worker.

Work and life in the company town took place under a considerable degree of control from the Company where the constant presence and possibility for control and paternal relations existed. Yet, one's work life and non-work life came to have a degree of integration: work, family and community took place within a temporal and spatial field of continuation, where social interactions took on a field of meaning beyond what could be prescribed and controlled through the Company (White 2012).

Harvey, in explaining his term of flexible accumulation and the neoliberal strategies developing during the 1970s onwards, mentions that from within the tenets of flexible accumulation, two basic strategies common to capitalism still exist in terms of obtaining profit: securing absolute surplus value achieved through increasing working hours and lowering standards of living and securing relative surplus value through organizational and technological change to gain profit. A key component is a "new labour market structure" (1990: 151) in which goals are "to reduce the number of 'core' workers and to rely increasingly upon a work force that can quickly be taken on board and equally quickly and costlessly be laid off when times get bad" (Harvey 1990: 152).

The contemporary Oil Sands work-camp is a technological innovation which allows such causalization to take place and occur in the Canadian resource extraction sector. Russell, also inspired by Harvey's key intervention on the importance of time and space to political economic analysis, posits such work-camps as redefining certain time and space relations. Russell notes that Canadian mining firms have begun using "radically spatialized" industrial relations – departing from the former methods of settling a workforce in the vicinity of an operation for several generations (Dennis *et al* 1956; Lucas 1971; Luxton 1980; White 2012). Rather, with many mining operations now having a life-span measured in years or several decades rather than generations, such firms now instigate long-distance commuting patterns to secure workforces instead. Mining now has less job security and far less employment continuity than before. Thus, radically spatialized industrial relations refer to the separation of home and work through long-distance commuting and in the turnover time of capital. "Where once the industry had provided long-term employment in spatially fixed communities, now short-term work in *non-existent* communities was emerging in certain sectors of the industry" (Russell 1999: 22).

The work-camp as the neoliberal answer to the company town operates principally as an institution crafted solely to house and maintain workers while issues of workers' needs for social networks of family and friends are bracketed off as non-considerations. Work-camps represent neoliberal desires to reframe worker subjectivity and instil into workers capital's desires for such workers to be essentially infinitely portable and flexible units of labour, literally separated from the realms of family, friends

and other forms of non-productive social interaction, offering the essential necessities of food and shelter for worker renewal but none of the enduring social relations to be found at and through "home".

And yet, capital's implicit desires are not automatically received by workers. In my interviews with oil sands workers, such individuals often found life in the work-camps as either a necessary if not particularly pleasant element of working out West or rather as quite unsettling. At the same time, such individuals often found difficulty in articulating precisely what was unsettling about work-camp life. Many described the work-camps as comfortably providing the essentials and seemingly making strides to "make the workers happy".

> Camps are pretty good. Anything and everything you want is there. Nice camp where I was at, there was, they were getting ready to double the size of it, there was thirty-five hundred guys there and there was supposed to be seven thousand. But ah, I liked it a little better 'cause you were out in the woods, like, quiet, right? Like, Fort Mac's just, you go to Tim Horton's, you're in the lineup for 45 minutes, you go to Wal-Mart, an hour you're standing in line. Just chaos everywhere you go right? In camp, everything's there, all you can eat, anything. Your lunch is made, just walk in in the morning, walk around the room and grab what you want. Go to your room at night, your bed is made, fresh towels out for you. Everything's done right.

Yet, something about life in the work-camps made people uncomfortable which various informants brought out in different ways. Some brought up the lack of privacy involved in shared bathrooms and the cafeteria-style eating. As Angus stated in the prologue the routine and the regimented lifestyle that the work-camp requires came to be a challenge:

> So you and I wake up at 6 o'clock, let's say. So every morning, I would wake up with this certain individual, I'd open my door and see him every day. I don't work with him, I don't know him personally. We head to the bathroom at the same time, then we sit there and we urinate together and then we brush our teeth

> in the sink next to each other and then you'd take your towel, take one shower in the morning and one in the evening, I'd go back to my room and it was the same routine. And it was the same routine. I'd get my same, my same food, right, bag my own lunch.

Others noted the social isolation, lack of contact with family and friends and other specific elements about work-camp life while noting the difficulty of social isolation and the solitude, along with the irony of feeling alone in an institution while being in close contact with hundreds or thousands of other workers:

> Out in the woods and not seein' anybody you know. Just sitting in a machine for twelve hours a day with nothing to do but think and then go to camp and sit in your room with nothing to do but think. Just drove me crazy, right...It gets pretty hard on the head after a bit.

Some workers noted that they enjoyed their time in camp or at least had found it tolerable and many noted that they appreciated the fact that the presence of the work-camps allowed them the opportunity to access the labour market of the Oil Sands. Yet, these workers would also note that they would incorporate various strategies to get by in the camp life: "You just have to get into a certain mind-set. You're out there to make money, you know what I mean. It's not a vacation, you just get used to it".

Others noted the impacts it had on their "psyche" as being "hard on the head" or "hard on the nerves" while noting that for someone to get through their time at the work-camp one had to take on a certain "mind-set", "get in the zone" or otherwise somehow change their mentality. I take these recognitions as articulations of how attempts of neoliberal practices to impact upon worker subjectivity are received by workers and how workers attempt to adapt to such practices rather than necessarily accepting the underlying conditions upon which these practices are based. To delve into this in more detail, in the following section, I explore the experiences related by Ann, a long-time

kitchen worker in one of the larger work-camp complexes, of her years-long attempts to adapt to life in camp and her recognition that in order to survive she would have to "become a robot" which meant temporarily detaching herself from anything not associated with her worker identity: ties with friends, community and tradition and what the ultimate consequences of these tactics meant for her.

"Bringing Pieces of Home with Me"

Ann is from a small Acadian fishing village, the same village where she lived as a child and raised her own daughter. She has lived in the same small two-story house by the water's edge for most of her life. Through most of her early adulthood, she worked in the village to support herself and her daughter within the fishing industry principally in a fish packing plant. Despite the long hours at the fish plant and the challenges of raising a daughter as a single mother, she was able to find time for her passion, painting. Her evenings were filled with painting in the little studio she had fashioned for herself in a small room on the ground floor of her house, creating scenes of life in the Acadian village that she remembered from her youth.

In the wake of the cod moratorium of the early 1990s and the collapse of the fisheries on which the village depended, the provincial government began to develop a local tourist industry to provide an economic alternative to the defunct fishing industry. The fish packing plant closed and Ann struggled to find work in the small village, soon finding a summer position working at the local tourist information centre while Employment Insurance provided income during the winter months. Her daughter finished

high school and like many of the youth in the village moved to Halifax and later on to Toronto.

Meanwhile, Ann managed to turn her love of painting into a small business, applying for and receiving a small business development grant to build her own folk art store and gallery. She renovated the ground floor of her house, turning it into a shop showcasing local artists and artisans with her primary market being the principally American tourists passing through the village on the way to the scenic regions of Cape Breton during the Summer and Fall tourist season.

She blames her personal economic downfall, the great deal of debt she had to take on, her loss of a job and the closing of her store on a series of global events. Particularly, the events of September 11, 2001 led to a severe reduction in American tourism through the village, leading her to be dismissed from her part-time job at the local tourist centre and to eventually close her own folk-art store when what she thought would be a temporary lull in the tourism market proved to be enduring.

During this period, more and more people from the village had been travelling out West, particularly former fishermen taking employment as labourers and tradesmen in the Oil Sands. Yet, increasingly a gendered division of labour migration had been emerging with more and more women voyaging out to work in housecleaning and cooking duties within the work-camps themselves. At the end of the tourist season in which Ann made the decision to close her shop, she researched work-camp job opportunities via the internet and sent off a number of resumes to the various companies managing work-camps scattered through the Oil Sands and quickly secured employment. Within two

months, she had used the last of her savings to pay for a flight to Edmonton and, meeting with other work-camp attendants at the hiring firm's downtown office, boarded the five-hour bus ride north to her new work place for a five-month contract.

Ann's first two contracts were in a small winter camp – a temporary mobile camp constructed in the fall and dismantled by spring, housing workers who remove the forest and bog that exists over the bituminous sands in marshland areas that can be accessed by heavy excavation machinery only during the winter freeze period. Employed as a kitchen helper, Ann found work in the kitchen monotonous and mostly consisted of washing potatoes and peeling vegetables to provide meals for the couple of hundred oil sands workers in camp.

Ann relates that, due to the debt she acquired before closing her store and the complete lack of work opportunities at home, her first two trips out West were motivated by sheer economic survival. The pay was much better than what she was used to. Although her pay rate of eleven dollars an hour was only slightly above Alberta's minimum wage, it was over twice the minimum wage employment she held at the tourism centre over the past decade (Nova Scotia's minimum wage ranged from $5.00 to $5.50 per hour throughout the 1990s) while the ample overtime and free room and board meant that she was able to pay off her debts quickly and begin to save money for the first time in her life. Meanwhile, the seasonal nature of the employment allowed her to have the better part of spring, summer and fall at home with her living expenses covered by access to Employment Insurance payments.

Between her first and second trips home, she ran into an acquaintance in her village who also worked out West in a larger work-camp as a room cleaner. This acquaintance informed Ann that the company she worked for was one of the less desirable companies that paid wages lower than other camps. With her friend's help, Ann applied to a much larger work-camp housing 1500 workers that operated year-round and began working there in the spring shortly after finishing her second contract. Her goals were initially rather humble: her ageing house was slowly sliding into a state of dilapidation and she need to save enough money to replace the windows and insulation as she planned to grow old there. At the same time, Ann, in her mid-fifties, considered that if she could continue for ten years, the work-camp position could become a job that would take her to retirement.

Ann began working in her current work-camp in 2007. This work-camp differs from the temporary and mobile camp where Ann was previously employed in that it is much larger and, as a permanent institution, operated year-round. Ann's current work-camp is one of the larger work-camps in the oil sands region with a typical population of around 1200 workers and the capacity to have a revolving capacity of 1500 workers during peak periods. Ann stays in a wing reserved for female workers, many of whom are camp attendants like her: cleaners, kitchen helpers and laundry operators. Ann explains at one point that:

> The camp we're in is very nice. There's a bar, there's a gym. Everyone has their own room. It's like a university dorm. Small, you know, single bed. And you're sharing the showers with the lady next to you, 'cause you got adjoining rooms. You got free internet, a telephone in your room. So that's pretty good.

Ann's tasks in the work-camp kitchen as a kitchen helper consist of aiding in the preparation of cafeteria-format meals for the workers of the camp. As such, her duties mainly include basic food preparation duties such as washing potatoes and other vegetables, cutting lettuce for salads and serving meals in the cafeteria's counter at defined hours. The kitchen itself resembles a factory floor, spread out over a huge area with its own hierarchically organized workforce of cook, assistant cooks, kitchen helpers and dishwashers to provide three meals a day (two cafeteria meals and a packed lunch for workers to take to their work sites) for the 1200 to 1500 workers in camp.

Ann explains her sense of alienation in the kitchen during her first few days, with its banks of industrial fridges and unfamiliar kitchen equipment mechanized and industrialized in sizes Ann had never conceived of before. Several times in these first few days, she got lost in the mazes of fridges, food preparation areas and other machineries while her descriptions were in stark contrast to her cramped and intimate kitchen where we sat and drank tea while she related her work-camp stories to me. Rather, kitchen work reminded her more of her former work in the fish packing plant with work on the "factory floor" of the kitchen organized according to Tayloristic principles of breaking down tasks to their smallest component and dividing these tasks among the work staff. Ann explains the monotony and tedium of these activities, where the act of conception and execution are, even in the simplest of tasks, quite separate. The act of making garlic bread for spaghetti night, for instance, becomes a five-hour task divided among several workers (one to spread the butter, one to arrange the bread on cooking sheets and one to transport full cooking sheets to the ovens). "So if you wash potatoes, you wash 300 pounds of

potatoes. It's basically a production line, it's not like cooking supper at home. They say 'go wash the potatoes', you know you're going to be four hours or whatever, washing potatoes."

Similarly, the act of serving the food came to be drained of social context for Ann. During mealtimes as part of the cafeteria serving crew, Ann scoops and ladles meals onto the plates of hundreds of workers as they proceed before her in assembly-line fashion along the cafeteria counter. Ann recalls the frustration of the lack of opportunity for social contact during these times, particularly when she would recognize workers from back home or hear their Acadian accent.

> The thing is, when I'm working, it's their supper times. I'm serving them. I say "hi" but I got a line-up of guys waiting. I don't have time to socialize. I'll notice them 'cause of the accent or they'll be wearing Cape Breton T-shirts. Nobody had time to socialize. You're there to work.

In short time, Ann came to feel that life in the camps was to be totally and entirely directed towards work with a regimented lifestyle wholly based around one's work-life. Privacy is at a minimum while life becomes routine and predictable. Workers such as Ann in the work-camps hold an additional strain perhaps not felt as strongly by oil sands workers who live the camps but leave on a daily basis to go to their work-site. For such work-camp workers, the work-camp is both work-site and home-site while one never really has the chance to leave one's site of work during a typical work period.

As such, Ann's routine came to consist of waking up in the morning, spending perhaps a couple of hours of time by herself watching morning television in her small room and then heading to the cafeteria kitchen to work the 10 am to 9 pm shift, then

retreating back to her room to sleep before beginning the process anew, leaving little time or opportunity to socialize beyond the sphere of work.

> Well, there, there's no talking. You get up in the morning, you go to work, you know who you're going to meet in the hallway at a certain time, because it's that person that goes to work at that certain time... You can talk to the person you're working with that day. When you're serving people, you can't really talk to them because you're serving people.

The routine, the lack of privacy and the unique constraints of work-camp life began to wear heavily on Ann, where even in the privacy of her room, the thin walls often reminded her of the institutional context which placed her in close context with thousands of strangers: "You cough, I'll hear. You fart, I'll hear and smell it... It's not a normal environment for anybody."

While Ann is working at the camp, her room and lodging are included as part of her compensation. During her three-week long shifts, she will typically work as a kitchen helper ten hours per day, although overtime when the kitchen staff is running behind schedule means that fourteen-hour days are not uncommon. As part of her contract obligations, at the end of her 21-day shift (the maximum amount of days allowed to be consecutively worked according to Alberta labour laws), Ann receives a mandatory seven day vacation before beginning the process anew. While she is actively working, her room and board are provided for but her work contract mandates her to leave the work-camp complex during her obligatory seven days of non-work. When Ann leaves camp for the week, she is obliged to take her personal belongings from her room with her as there is no guarantee that she will return to the particular room upon her return, since, during peak periods of oil sands activity, work-camps stagger work and temporary accommodation

schedules so that ideally, at any point in the month, a quarter of a work-camp's population is on their week "off". In this way while the work-camp has a maximum capacity of 1200 individuals at a single moment, in peak periods, efficient shuffling of workers into vacant rooms allows the camp to potentially house 25 per cent more workers than its maximum capacity over a monthly period, allowing a work-camp with a capacity of 1200 to have the potential for an actual revolving monthly population of 1500.

Ann notes that although she enjoys and in fact requires the week off once a month, the "living out of your suitcase" feeling of having to leave and potentially switch rooms once a month serves to prevent any attachment to one's living space and is a consistent reminder that one's life is being lived in flux.[55] Whereas many workers use this week off to briefly return home, for Ann, the cost of a plane ticket and the long distance between home and away (equalling a day of travel in each direction) meant that returning home once a month was never seriously considered. While for some of the trades-workers in camp, the 21-and-7 arrangement includes paid monthly travel between home and work as part of their contract, this offer is typically not (if ever) extended to the "lesser skilled" kitchen/cafeteria workers like Ann. Ann notes that this is a cause of resentment between the workers who live in Alberta, who are able to take a bus home to see their families once a month, and those from the East coast, many of whom are only able to return home during a negotiated three-week vacation that employees are entitled to once per year.

[55] In fact, this "living from one's suitcase" feeling was noted by nearly every work-camp resident I spoke with as one of the more difficult aspects of work-camp life, particularly for those who did not have the means to return home for several days in between their three week contracts.

Ann and the friend who helped her obtain the camp job have made a monthly ritual of taking a bus to Edmonton and staying in a hotel during their week off as their reward for working hard and as an escape from the mundane routine of work-camp life. Ann relates how, before beginning work at this particular camp, she and her friend had imagined going out West to be something of an adventure and made plans to utilize their week off to see the various touristic destinations of Western Canada such as Banff, the Rockies and Calgary. Yet, after the first 21 days, Ann realized that these weeks off would instead be spent recovering from the gruelling work schedule, explaining that "you get to the motel, all you want to do is sleep 'cause you're pooped. The next day, you're pooped, so you sleep again. You have to take times to relax, because working 21 days in a row is not easy."

Although this week away from work provided a necessary period of rest and recovery, over the course of the first year it too soon became part of the monotony associated with her world of work.

> It's not like you're visiting family, there's nobody there. You're still in a hotel... You go swimming, you go to a store, whatever. But it's not like coming home. We get out of camp just to get a break, to get out of the routine or whatever. But after a while, it becomes routine in Edmonton anyway.

On one hand, Ann considered herself quite fortunate to have secured her job at the work-camp. For the first time in her life, she was able to know what it was like to not live paycheck-to-paycheck and to be able to save some money for an eventual retirement. The work, while monotonous, was not particularly taxing and was less strenuous than work in the fish packing plant. It paid much better, particularly due to the large amount of

overtime hours she was able to work. Life in the work-camp was lonely and isolating but it provided her with everything she needed – a private room, a comfortable bed, included meals and a modicum of privacy. Yet, there was something disagreeable about the work-camp experience that for Ann exceeded the sum of its parts. In our conversations she alluded to this element about how living in the camp made one feel "uneasy" but could never precisely explain what caused this particular feeling, describing this sentiment of life in camp through phrases such as "it plays with your head."

She first surmised that her issue was homesickness, particularly during her first four-month contract in the work-camps. "I don't mind the work. I don't mind that work at all. If I could do the work and come home every month, every two months, it would be no problem." Ann, in her first two trips out West, attempted to buffer herself from this aspect of this work situation with various reminders of home, mainly a laptop full of Acadian music and a calling card to call friends from down home. In the present day, having grown accustomed to being home only three weeks out of the year, Ann laughs at her past self who considered four months away from home as a hardship. She recalls how she tried to bring "pieces of home" with her to combat her homesickness. But she found that her tactics had an opposite effect:

> The first year I was up there, I was calling people from down home every day. I'll give this one a call, I'll give that one a call with my little [*long distance pre-paid phone*] card. And I'd listen to the Acadian music. Well, that made me more lonely!

And so as the strain of the work-camp experience bore down on her Ann attempted to "turn herself off" in order to cope with the stresses of work place life while in the work-camp by cutting off any ties that she held with her former life. Ann attempted

to transform herself into exactly what this organization of work expected her to be – a simple unit of labour or as she describes herself, "a working robot". She recognized that talking with friends and family would only make her resent her time in the work-camp and enforce her feelings of loneliness and isolation while listening to traditional music from down home would only serve to underline her discontent towards her present situation.

> It wasn't helping me any, so this time I went, I didn't listen to practically no Acadian music, I practically didn't call nobody in 7 months!...I don't know if it helped but it made me harder, anyways.

During this time, Ann came to understand that those who do well in the work-camp situation are those that understand that life in the work-camps is simply "just about work" which translates into "putting your life on hold". Ann came to see the time of work in the camps as a sacrifice for a better life to come while explaining that many others hold similar views expressed through the prison metaphors of "doing your time" while living in your "cell".

By Ann's fifth year in the work-camps, she had worked two four-month contracts followed by a three-year stretch of employment in the larger, permanent modern work-camp. During this time she had only been able to come home for two three-week vacations during the summer months. By this point in her out West experience, Ann had, as she believed, found survival strategies for life in the camps. She had educated herself about personal finance and was investing a great part of her wages into RRSPs to provide for her retirement while the rest of her earnings were being saved for eventual repairs to her house and to replace her aging car at home. Meanwhile, she had found ways to adapt

to the work-camp experience. She came to accept that she would have to avoid socializing with people. She had seen many people who had begun "socializing"—which in the work-camp context entailed visiting someone in their room to have a few beers in the evening—quickly spiralling out of control with the one or two beers a night in the company of work-camp friends quickly turning to eight or nine beers every night. She felt the smartest thing to do was to "become hard", not think about home and to be "a robot", working without thinking of home or the people back home, all the while keeping in mind that the sacrifice of what she enjoyed in the present would allow her to enjoy life in the future. In such a way, she attempted to essentially repress her complex personhood and strove to transform herself into the ideal neoliberalized unit of labour which this technology demanded she become.

Then, in the spring of that year, a reoccurring bout of carpal tunnel syndrome in her wrist, a long-standing condition aggravated by the repetitiveness of work duties, progressed to the point that Ann could no longer continue working in the kitchen. She made arrangements to take a medical leave to return home to have her condition treated. Yet, upon returning home and having a meeting with her family doctor and long-time acquaintance, the impact of her work-camp experiences came home as well. "When I arrived back, I went to see the doctor about my hand. He said, 'Never mind about your hand'. I looked at him and said, 'What's wrong?' He said, 'You're not yourself'." Her doctor noted that Ann was less talkative than her former self while appearing apathetic and unsettled. Following this conversation, Ann was diagnosed with burnout syndrome as

a result of chronic stress and recommended to take three months of sick leave before considering returning to the work-camps.

Ann's unexpected time at home gave her the opportunity to enjoy elements of her life that she hadn't had the chance to do while working out West. She began to paint again and took on a new-found interest in photography, frequently driving out of the village to take pictures of the coastline and ample ocean and nature. It was during these three months that Ann and I began to talk on a regular basis, occasionally having tea in the cramped confines of her small kitchen, eating greasy deep-fried scallops at the local restaurant and going for the occasional tour around the area in her beat-up old hatchback with Ann chain-smoking and cursing herself for forgetting to bring her camera whenever we would see a bald eagle perched in a tree.

During our time together, Ann would often bring the conversation to reflections of her work-camp experiences, becoming noticeably ill at ease while describing the routine, boredom and loneliness of the past five years. Life in the "institution" clearly weighed heavily upon her. After several weeks at home, she came to decide that the most difficult aspect of the work-camp experience was the detachment from one's social networks and the strain that accompanies being away from family and friends. She cast her experiences of chronic stress and burnout as the typical reaction to such working and living conditions:

> Us, we don't go home, we don't go home for a year. We got family and friends—we don't see them for a year. So, it's not only that they're tired physically, their morale has gone done the drain. There's none. And when they're home, they do like me, they go see a doctor and he'll say, "You're not normal, this is making you sick". Stress leave. So, I think there was something like forty-six people gone on stress leave and they're all from New Brunswick

> and Nova Scotia. And that's what happens, the moment the doctor sees your face.

She would bring up the monotony of regimented life and the differences in the small joys to be found in the daily routines of everyday life that she had come to appreciate. Many of her ruminations would lead back to the social isolation she felt in the work-camp, how life in the work-camps was completely devoid of social contact. In a way, her time home was bittersweet with Ann both celebrating and mourning the loss of the social contact that she knew she would endure once she returned out West.

> That's what I miss the most, the peace and quiet, being able to sit in my backyard and have a fire in my fire pit, having people go by and say "Oh, Ann's having a fire" and coming back for a chat. That's what I miss.

Technologies of and transitions to neoliberalism

The institution of the modern Oil Sands work-camp serves as a new technology aimed towards delivering and maintaining a workforce in line with neoliberal logics. While a false genealogy presents modern work-camp institutions as a progression within the history of temporary worker accommodations, it represents instead a shift from the company town. While retaining certain key elements of Fordism such as coercive forms of control and Tayloristic attempts at rationalizing work found in the company town, the work-camp comes to be overlaid with neoliberal logics which insist on flexibility and reforming worker subjectivities. Within the work-camp, co-existing with Fordist attempts at coercive and paternalistic control are neoliberal attempts to render workers more flexible, a flexibility which creates a new form of worker coercion – the flexibility to be "at work" all the time, the flexibility to work overtime on a moment's notice (and to

welcome overtime since it distracts from the monotony of camp life) and to be separated from elements of life not directly tied to the productive spheres of work: friends, family, community and tradition.

The work-camp provides a guaranteed source of labour but also a source of labour which is easy to dismiss once that need has passed. For example, work-camp populations as mentioned, peaked at approximately 26 284 workers in 2008 but yet declined to 23 325 workers by 2010 following the economic downturn. As George's work-life narrative has underlined earlier in this dissertation, the inherent flexibility of this system allowed this industry to shed nearly 3000 jobs quickly and without public controversy. This acceptance of uncertainty comes under the rubric of flexibility once more while Sennett also notes that the uncertainty of today caused by flexible behaviour of capitalism and the flexibility expected of workers is unique in that it is not connected to any historical disaster – no wars or environmental disasters. Instead, uncertainty is woven into the fabric of current capitalism and its instability to be taken as normal (Sennett 1998). Yet such uncertainty and contingent status is accepted on the part of workers: due in part to the conditions in which they live in the away, workers do not want their lives in the work-camp to be a long-term situation nor do they desire for such conditions to be part of a long-term source of labour. They in fact desire and accept their work to be temporary and contingent. Meanwhile, the consequences of the spatial and temporal divisions which mark the lived experiences within work-camps and the separation between home life and work life impact worker subjectivity in ways not seen the company town model.

As frequently mentioned, a central metaphor used by Ann and others was that of the work-camp as prison. Back-and-forth workers often made such connections, referring to their period at work as "doing time" and to their room in camp as their "cell" while the general idea of the social isolation, the routinization and regimentation of life, lack of privacy and boredom that went hand-in-hand with work-camp life as being equivalent to incarceration. The metaphor underlines how experiences in the work-camp demand a linkage with the regulating and disciplining nature of other similar institutions which are formed to allow for the regulation and discipline of certain bodies and certain populations.

As the Foucauldian line of thought goes, the prison is a relatively recent phenomenon, emerging from Enlightenment thought that redefined crime as not an affront to the sovereign but rather an attack against the emerging idea of a generalized society. The consequences of crime shifted from public spectacles of corporal punishment and execution to the concealed re-education and rehabilitation of the "spirit" in the new technology of the prison. Practices of surveillance, regulation, regimentation and routine sought to create the prisoner as a docile body instilled with the requisite discipline (Foucault 1995 [1977]).

Such attempts to instill discipline and control become a prominent feature of modern life as the state comes to increasingly connect itself with groups interested in shaping and administrating the lives of people to achieve various goals (Rose *et al.* 2006). In this line of thought, Schrauwers examines the formation of Dutch pauper colonies where such technologies developed and became commonplace (2011). Van der Bosch's

farm colonies were designed ostensibly with the goals of eradicating pauperism by placing such paupers in heavily regulated communities. Carefully policed farm production and the administration of the minutiae of everyday life would instill a discipline in the poor, allowing them to become productive members of the colony and of society while successfully adapting to the circumstances of these colonies and becoming ideal productive units would allow paupers to be rewarded with certain degrees of liberty (2011).

As Schrauwers explains, Van der Bosch's colonies succeeded not so much in alleviating poverty but rather in containing the potential political threat of the poor and safeguarding an economic system from the less desirable elements which that system had itself produced (2011).

The regimentation and routinization of life found in the Foucauldian prison and Van der Bosch's colonies have obvious parallels to the experiences of the work-camps. And yet, it is in the differences between such institutions of control that the interactions between hegemony and subjectivity come to the forefront. Both the prison and the colony made reference to a higher moral context to justify their existence, either in terms of eradicating delinquency through reform or poverty through re-education in disciplined production, even if these moralizing contexts served as a veneer to allow for the continued function of certain political, economic and legal systems. Meanwhile, instilling such discipline relied on cameralistic efforts of control (Schrauwers 2011) with Bentham's Panopticon the principal metaphor of being subjected to the unseen watch-

tower prison guard at the centre of such systems of surveillance and the eventual internalization of such surveillance (Foucault 1995 [1977]).

Yet, these contexts are drastically different in the space of the work-camp. On one hand, the work-camp comes to rely on certain processes of capitalism to obtain a workforce through processes of unemployment, capital flight and other instances of "rupture" (Sider 2006). Yet, moralizing discourse is not commonly applied to such work-camps as a justification for their existence. Rather, the overarching ostensible goals of the work-camps are unconcealed: the work-camps provide a necessary economic function in the context of the particular space of capital of the Oil Sands, in providing the immediate reproductive needs of a temporary labour force in order for them to continue to supply productive labour while this is a relationship in which individuals freely enter and may freely exit when they desire. Any higher "purpose" or explicit goals for the work-camp comes to be supplied by the workers themselves: as a means to obtain a livelihood for oneself or to support one's family, to escape financial debt, to obtain some element of economic security and stability in the future or to simply escape the deprivations of unemployment and poverty found at home.

Cameralistic elements of control are visually and virtually absent: the centralized disciplining force of the prison guard or colony administrator has no direct counterpart in the work-camp. Power is rather dispersed and seemingly ephemeral from the point of view of workers, with authority absent or drastically decentralized in the work-camps through webs of sub-contracted services administrating various diverse and separated

functions in the camps. [56] For Ann, her only link to authority came in the form of her kitchen manager, the head cook who would give her daily instructions. Beyond that, Ann had no knowledge of who owned or administrated her particular work-camp or how that ownership related to the broader processes of production. Life was heavily regimented but the coordination of everyday life emerged from the actions of many seemingly unconnected agents: the sous-chef's daily list of tasks; the camp administrative assistant glancing at a spreadsheet and assigning Ann her monthly room after her seven-day vacation; the underpaid security guard who occasionally roamed the halls. This underscores the individualizing aspect in the shaping of a neoliberalized subjectivity in which hegemonic process and individual consciousness traverse. Neoliberalized subjectivities are formed through processes of individual consent and inclusion rather than coercion and explicit discipline from external sources. Workers, although conditioned to accept the living and working conditions of the work-camp through a conflation of hegemonic process, come to make an ostensible individualized choice to enter into such relations. Thus, becoming engaged with the technologies of the work-camp entails a level of collusion absent in Foucault's prison or in Van der Bosch's pauper colonies.

On the proverbial factory floor, workers could focus their distaste and disapproval of the negative elements of their work onto their supervisors or onto the owners of production—the foreman or supervisor could become the representative agent of the

[56] All services in Ann's work-camp were fulfilled by separate and unconnected sub-contractors. Ann, for instance, was employed through Aramark, a multinational kitchen-services conglomerate while cleaning, security, administration and other elements of work-camp daily functions were similarly sub-contracted.

exploitation they experienced in the labour process (Burawoy 1979, 1985). Similarly, in the prison, the guards could be seen as the representation of the penal system itself while the colonial administrator stood as the centre of paternalistic control of the pauper colonies. Early twentieth century towns in Industrial Cape Breton had the ephemeral Company towards which workers could direct their anger with the burning of company stores in coal miner labour struggles a particularly potent symbol of how the Company was seen as the cause of regional deprivation (Barber 2002b).

But in the context of the work-camp, Ann, in having internalized certain neoliberal tenets, seemingly has no one to blame for her situation beyond herself. As Ann's experiences reveal, the work-camp operates as a technology designed to impose tenets of neoliberalism upon a working force. Workers are expected to become mobile, flexible and individualised while the consequences of becoming such mobile, flexible individualized workers is such that this idealized neoliberal work force has no requirements or need of non-productive social relations. Family, friends and community are reformulated as unimportant and non-crucial elements of one's day-to-day life. Workers who adapt to these neoliberal logics reframe themselves as simplified units of labour,[57] portable and disposable and with no need for the social connections of friends, family and community, at least for the present period of time. In the meantime, the creation of neoliberalized subjectivities entails a necessary collusion with such logics and the acceptance of neoliberal views as to what constitutes a worker as workers take it upon

[57] This focus on framing the individual as a labourer contrasts with contemporary attempts in capital processes to reframe individuals primarily as consumers – in the isolated context of the work-camp, even ones' potential to assume the role of consumer is, at least temporarily, suppressed.

themselves to become self-managed, self-disciplined, individualized and adaptable units of labour. While the labour struggles of the factory floor allowed for resistance within the labour process, the alternative of resisting such structures entails by default excluding oneself from such relations. While the tenets of neoliberal logic may not be fully adopted, in the case of Ann, the needs of complex personhood are deferred into an aspirational future.

Several months into my fieldwork, Ann's period of sick leave was coming to an end and she made the decision to return to the work-camps of Northern Alberta. She felt that her time at home had re-energized her and had given her the strength to return out West for another period. She came to the realization that her original plan to work out West for ten years was impossible and would result in her "going fuckin' nuts" and so made a promise to herself that she would continue for as long as she could, sacrificing the present for a better future. Before she left, she told me:

> It's just that I've had a break and I'm ready to put in another stretch.... But I've done my time. Like they say, it's prison and I've done my time. I'm just going to do another stretch of my time...After everything is fixed and whatever, that's enough for me. And I'll have my life back.

Section 3

Dynamics of Migration Part 2: "Home"

Chapter Six

Held in Reserve: Exploring the Sending Region

["Glace Bay" by Lawren Harris, ink drawing. Reprinted from Larisey 1993]

> The other thing too for your research, there, is you could look at why they pulled industry from Cape Breton, so that people are forced to go to Fort McMurray.
>
> - Megan, a former safety supervisor who sojourned in Fort McMurray in the late 1990s to early 2000s before returning to Industrial Cape Breton

> It's just, I think that they've repressed this place to the point where we've got no choice. Cause there's only a certain amount of people that do what we do. Like, there's not that many people, idiots like me that would jump on a plane and go over there. It takes a certain breed of person to do that. It's what it is.
>
> - Freddy, a carpenter that has done multiple back-and-forth out West contracts over the past two decades

As examined in the introductory chapter, throughout 2009 and 2010 residents, community leaders and business leaders in Industrial Cape Breton collaborated to heavily pressure provincial and federal governments to provide funding for a harbour dredging

project, the first steps towards the construction of a new shipping port in Sydney. As I've previously emphasized, the future construction and operation of this industrial waterfront development was widely seen as a key component in the economic revitalization of the region. Leading up to the 2011 Canadian federal election, the minority Conservative government announced plans to provide the several million dollars needed to partially fund the preliminary phase of harbour dredging. Yet, in his speech to the Sydney Chamber of Commerce on April 27, 2011 in which he announced that harbour development would begin, Mayor John Morgan soberly pointed out how the handful of jobs created by the project would hardly mitigate Industrial Cape Breton's economic decline nor alleviate the concomitant social impacts of such decline:

> Our current official rate of unemployment exceeds 18 per cent. More than half our adult population has withdrawn from the official workforce. Fully a quarter of our region's children less than six years of age, live in poverty. We have one of the highest poverty rates in the country, one of the lowest average life expectancies in the country, close to the earliest age of disability and we lead the province in absolute population decline.[...] Why?

While Morgan's goal was to point out that one industrial project would not be the panacea for the region's ills, his view on the region's uniquely difficult economic situation has a long historical precedent before it. Ninety years prior to this speech, Lawren Harris of the Group of Seven visited Industrial Cape Breton in 1921 at the height of the coal mining industry's exploitive labour practices. The region's poverty and "Dickensian misery" (Gibbs and Leach 2009:20) inspired him to produce socially critical works of art such as "Miners' Houses" and "Glace Bay", the latter a poignant sketch of a miner's emaciated wife holding a frail child, pictured above (Larisey 1993). In the mid-

1960s, after the Fordist compact had improved industrial labour conditions, many still remained excluded or expelled from such work relations, prompting the Federal government to designate the region as a "special area" within Atlantic Canada needing particular considerations due to its "fragile and corroding economy" (Donald 1966:22-23). Two decades later, Barber described the region as one experiencing a "historically persistent economic decline" (1990:1) existing on the geographic and economic periphery of the Canadian state. While Atlantic Canada in general has been frequently noted as being a "chronically depressed region" (Brooks and Miljan 2003: 124) with higher levels of unemployment and lower household incomes than other areas of Canada (Morgan 2009), Industrial Cape Breton has been particularly singled out as a region all too familiar with long-lasting experiences of economic hardship, an economic hardship rooted in its origins at the turn of the twentieth century as a space of capital (Harvey 2001) created to provide coal to fuel Canada's burgeoning national economy which spreads to its present-day state as a region struggling to redefine itself in a post-industrial period (Gibbs and Leech 2009).

As Morgan's speech underlines, these circumstances have not abated. In 2011, the unemployment rate in Cape Breton Island averaged 17 per cent, over twice Canada's national average of 7.4 per cent (Statistics Canada 2012). Meanwhile, the labour participation rate in Cape Breton Island – a measure of the combined percentage of employed and unemployed workers actively searching for work – sat at 54.5 per cent, far lower than Canada's national average of 66.8 per cent, suggesting that many have simply given up searching for remunerated work altogether (Statistics Canada 2012).

Additionally, the seasonal, contingent and temporary nature of many forms of employment in Cape Breton (such as in the fisheries and in the tourist industry) may skew such numbers while not taking into account those underemployed and unemployed for much of the year (*cf.* Barber 1990, 2002). While Industrial Cape Breton has been historically targeted by a number of federal and provincial attempts at regional economic development and has seen a number of community economic development groups and initiatives in far greater numbers than other regions of Canada (DeRoche 2003) such unemployment and under-employment levels have remained persistently high.

In his discussions on economic decline in Newfoundland outports, Sider (1980, 2006) notes how persistent unemployment and the redundant workers emerging from such circumstances is a relatively novel concept. For much of the history of capitalism, the central challenge was accessing labour; yet in the current era, the spectacle of people no longer required by processes of capital has become increasingly commonplace. Winson and Leach (2008), in a similar line of thought, refer to "displaced workers" to describe those whose work trajectories have been disrupted due to capital flight and capital restructurings with life-plans significantly interrupted as a result. Such workers "skid" from secure, decent jobs into rather precarious livelihood strategies based on periods of holding several part-time jobs along with stretches of unemployment as they shift from a "stable work world" to a "contingent work world" (2008:9). Meanwhile such circumstances of local redundancy and displacement create situations in which workers come to accept harsher work conditions and associated living conditions than those not familiar with such realities, effectively conditioning such workers to accept less from

their relations to the labour process (Sennett 1972,1998; Sider 2006; Winson and Leach 2008).

As such, with these elements framing the undercurrents of the following pages, this chapter is concerned with Industrial Cape Breton's developing role in its connection to the Oil Sands industry. As such, this chapter connects to issues raised in Chapter Four which empirically explored the extent to which the Oil Sands has become a receiving region for mobile labour and how other areas of Canada have emerged as sending regions, effectively operating as pools of reserve labour to supply labour power to such industries. Contrary to neo-classical economic theories of push-and-pull migration dynamics (Martin 2003), more than the initial labour requirements of capital is required in connecting geographically separated sites of production and sites of reserve labour while additionally, social agents are often hesitant to become the "infinitely portable, unencumbered economic agents" assumed by such approaches (Amit 2002:25). As such, this chapter argues that in the process of a region coming to be a site of reserve mobile labour, workers within the region come to develop a subjective acceptance of their roles as mobile labourers while certain conditions operating within the sending region must be present which allow such connections to form and persist.

The chapter begins by looking at the historical roots which have conditioned the current acceptance of neoliberalized mobile work arrangements and allowed for such processes to emerge, persist and be accepted without substantial critique. A key aspect of how these hegemonic processes come to play out in Industrial Cape Breton is through the ongoing transitions of what workers come to expect from their relations to the work

place, in other words, the transitions from Fordist classed subjectivities to neoliberalized classed subjectivities and the processes by which the latter comes to be superimposed upon the former.

While coal mining and steel-milling represented the economic back-bone of the region, a relatively small minority of the population were employed in these industries (Haiven 2009). For the many not employed in these industrialised, unionized environments, exclusion from Fordist work relations had two effects. First, it gave such workers a familiarity with the concept of Fordist-style labour relations; despite their exclusion from such relations, they were able to assemble a (admittedly idealized) picture of a form of work relations to which they could aspire. Second, and somewhat conversely, living in a region with a difficult labour market comes to play a role in priming subjects to accept the individualized, precarious and contingent relations to the work world associated with neoliberal logics. A long history of industrial decline and regional economic marginality may prepare individuals to be more accepting of neoliberal logics or, perhaps more accurately stated, be more likely to accept conditions where collusion in achieving neoliberal aims is necessary. With the loss of central industry in Industrial Cape Breton, the former Fordist workers themselves had to quickly adapt to this world of precarity. Yet, for both groups, a vision of Fordist-era work and its stability and security did not come to be abandoned but came to be altered as workers came to redefine their conceptions of what a Fordist classed identity may entail. Meanwhile, this shifting of worker subjectivities coincides with the period in which the need for temporary workers in the Oil Sands became especially pronounced. This pool of

trained labourers ready and willing to embark on trajectories of mobile labour came to play a fundamental role in allowing for the dramatic periods of expansion in the Oil Sands from the year 2000 onwards.

Additionally, connections of labour mobility between regions do not emerge happenstance as demonstrated in Chapter Four through the explorations of conditions which has allowed the Oil Sands region to host temporary workers from multiple locales. Similarly, processes of migration emerge and persist as a result of ongoing factors in the sending regions and beyond. As such, following from an exploration of the transformations of certain worker subjectivities, I examine three major factors connected to the conditions of new worker subjectivities which currently allow the region to serve as a sending region connected to the Oil Sands: the networks which connect potential labour migrants to western opportunities, the presence of the Employment Insurance system which allows certain groups of labour to be held in reserve and the connections to home and community which allow for labour mobility to be seen as a beneficial and viable option.

Neoliberalism has been defined fundamentally as hegemonic process (Albo 2009; Ong 2007) with the central underlying goal of restoring and centralising class power through the rhetoric of freedom, liberty, personal responsibility and through policies of privatisation, free trade and the free market (Harvey 2010). Many have written that a principal focus in neoliberal practice is the redefining of subjects, to discipline subjects to consent and accept neoliberal logics and see such logics as necessary, unavoidable and commonsensical elements of contemporary life (Martin 1994; Mollona 2005; Ong 2006;

Ortiz 2002). Yet, Crehan (2002) reminds us that hegemonic processes are not exclusively top down but met with resistance and opportunities for reinterpretation at many levels. Hegemonic processes emerge to create situations which conceal the operations of power yet that is not to say that this leaves no room for resistance and renegotiation.

Processes of capital have attempted to reshape and discipline workers in the past and capital has long attempted to reform workers into certain idealized forms (Ong 1991). Braverman, for instance, classically described through his deskilling hypothesis how Taylorism sought to separate the conception and execution of a task, transforming skilled craftsmen into homogenous, inter-replaceable assemblers (1974). Yet, the disciplining and shaping of workers into Tayloristic automatons was not simply unidirectional and workers did not simply subjectively incorporate such formations without critique or resistance. Nelson sums up how scientific reform of the workplace ultimately failed to prevent work slow-downs and other worker attempts to exercise control in the labour process:

> If the foreman, with his combination of threats and persuasion, could not change the workers' behaviour, what hope was there for an outside expert equipped with only a stopwatch and an incentive plan? Obviously there were limits to the manager's authority just as there were to the foreman's empire (1995:75).

As Burawoy's (1979) study of the factory floor revealed, individuals find creative means to resist, renegotiate or consent (at least partially, on their own terms) to the various processes in which they are part. Such non-acquiescence may ultimately come to be absorbed into surrounding hegemonic processes—as with Burawoy's example of the factory floor game of "making out" in which worker creativity resists attempts of

Tayloristic homogenization while ensuring that production continues unabated—but yet speaks to the individual capacity to respond to and impact upon the hegemonic processes in which one is enmeshed.

As a cautionary riposte which I have touched on in an earlier chapter, a danger to exploring hegemonic processes which motivate labour mobility is that such a discussion risks presenting migrations or mobile work trajectories as intrinsically abnormal or undesirable with such movements the result of top-down co-ordinations outside the purview of individuals' everyday lives. Many have begun to question why we as researchers place such a heavy interest on the idea of mobility to begin with (Brettell 2003; Hage 2005; Olwig 1999, 2007; Rapport and Dawson 1998). Some have mentioned that, in the present "age of migration" (Castles and Miller 1998) such labour mobility is no longer uncommon, and that in today's global world we are all migrants now (Rapport and Dawson 1998). Others have critiqued approaches which in singling out migration as a phenomenon of study implicitly end up reinforcing a premium on stability (Olwig 1999 and 2007; Trager 2005). Yet while studying migration does risk potentially privileging "relations of dwelling" over "relations of travel" (Clifford 1992:99), it is imperative to draw attention to the intertwining historical, cultural and political economic reasons for how certain instances of labour mobility emerge and come to be accepted as normal and commonplace. Movements to find work and to retain work, along with concomitant feelings of social dislocation and uprooting are gradually coming to be taken as accepted and expected if not always desirable aspects of contemporary life in North American capitalist society (Sennett 1999). Yet, we should exercise caution towards nonchalantly

accepting labour mobility as part and parcel of life and interrogate the conditions under which such mobility is taken, while not denying the impacts of precariousness emerging from such work arrangements and perhaps more importantly, underlining who stands to benefit from such relations.

Labour mobility and the creation of pools of potential mobile labourers is increasingly becoming a function of contemporary life but the need to continuously access labour power is a long-standing issue of capital. Early on, Marx saw cycles of employment and unemployment as endemic in capitalism. Capitalist processes routinely operate under cycles of boom and bust, regularly employing and dis-employing certain populations through processes of technological innovation and through mobilizing those outside or on the periphery of capitalist relations. This "industrial reserve army" served as a check on employed labourers while decreasing the value of labour power (Marx 1977; Harvey 2001, 2010). With conditions of unemployment becoming a much more structural aspect of capital economies (Heinz 2006) with nationalist ideas of full employment no longer a central concern of government (Hartman 2006), I argue that such relations and the acceptance of one's position as reserve labour and mobile reserve labour comes to necessitate a certain degree of consent from the workers themselves. With workers now "expected to carry the burden of insecurity" through accepting the logics and work ethics of neoliberalism and "absorbing the costs of capital" (Pupo and Thomas 2009: xv; *cf.* Dunk 2002), the transition from a Fordist environment of working relations to a mobile, neoliberalised environment of working relations entails a great deal of disciplining of a

work force, a rather profound readjustment of worker subjectivities and what workers expect and intend to receive in their relations to the labour process.

Prior to the closure of the central industries of mining and steel-milling during the late 1990s and early 2000s, experiences of un- and under-employment in Industrial Cape Breton were highly polarized. During the period ranging from the post-World War II acceptance of the Fordist compact to the circa-2000 industrial closures, the region's local workforce could be loosely categorized into two rather large groups. First were the unionized blue-collar workers employed in the central industries. This group, which consisted of a relatively small section of the total workforce nonetheless represented what was considered the region's better jobs and something of an "aristocracy of labour" (Haiven 2009). The second group of workers were those excluded from such labour relations: the un- or underemployed, those employed in less desirable and lower paying forms of work such as within the service sector, contract labour and other forms of contingent labour. Excluded from this binary is the very small tertiary group of professional, white-collar workers, the doctors, lawyers, managers and certain government employees who make up a very slim portion of the population (Morgan 2009).

Women were highly represented in the second category, frequently temporarily utilized in the labour force as flexible and seasonal workers. For instance, prior to the collapse of the fisheries industry in the 1990s, a major source of temporary employment in Industrial Cape Breton was to be found in various fish-packing plants with women making up a major proportion of this labour force (Barber 1990). While somewhat

industrialized and making use of Tayloristic principles, such packing plants lacked the worker protection, high pay and prestige afforded to the first group of workers and offered highly unstable work relations with many such plants opening and closing in communities throughout the region with little notice (Morgan 1990).

Yet while there was very little movement from the second group to the first, workers employed in the first group often found themselves becoming members of the second group through processes of deindustrialization and mechanization of labour processes[58] (Gibbs and Leech 2009, Morgan 2009). Coal mining and steel-milling in Cape Breton began a slow and sustained decline after a brief peak in the period following World War II, leading to the closures of these industries in the 1999-2001 period. As such, these closures were the last stage in a decades-long process of industrial decline rather than a completely unanticipated rupture. As a result, very few new hires were included in these Fordist-style relations during this lengthy period. Even when DEVCO[59] made plans to expand the mines following the 1970s oil crisis, mechanization of mining processes limited the amount of labour power needed and the expansion of the workforce in this period still had only marginal impacts on the region's overall unemployment rates (Morgan 2009).

---

[58] For instance, the heavy water plant in Glace Bay, operated by Atomic Energy of Canada, closed in the mid-1980s (Barber 1990; Morgan 2009), placing several hundred individuals out of work.

[59] Cape Breton Economic Development Corporation, the crown corporation which managed the mines from the late 1960s until their closures as noted in Chapter Two.

With little hiring of new workers in the central industries beyond the post World-War period in the late 1940s and the brief period of expansion in the 1970s interspersed with periods of decline, there was very much a generational component to unemployment in the region. In line with the circumstances which Winson and Leach have described as a "war of attrition on good jobs" (2008:88), during the period of decline leading up to closure, the mines and steel mill relied on easing workers into retirement while not replacing such positions. While employees were spared layoffs, no new workers were hired to replace these workers. As such, the impact of this particular style of restructuring came to be displaced to those who would have became future employees, the younger generation coming of working age in Industrial Cape Breton. It was this younger generation who were most acutely impacted by such decline. Meanwhile the consequences of such subtle restructuring over the course of the late twentieth century went relatively unchallenged and uncontested by not overly affecting the existing workforce.

During the period of sustained decline and continuing onwards to the present day, many informants noted the common sentiment that the only way to secure decent work in Industrial Cape Breton was through a family connection already employed in a specific industry. One informant noted how he couldn't "buy a job" in the mines when he was entering the workforce in the early 1970s with no relatives in the region's central industries. Meanwhile, other informants from families historically excluded from the Fordist work world referred to the mines as "father-son operations" to point out the prevalence of kin-favouring norms and the importance of kin networks in connecting

individuals to work opportunities.[60] Such circumstances came to engender a nepotistic attitude towards work relations in which one is either born into the Fordist work world or excluded from it, which greatly impacts how one views the world of work more generally.

Bill, for instance, spent most the 1970s working a string of part-time or temporary jobs as a general labourer interspersed with periods of unemployment. Despite DEVCO's expansion of the mines in this period he did not consider a career in the coal mines, not for lack of desire for this form of work but rather because he had been "born with the wrong family name". Yet, despite his exclusion from these Fordist relations, adapting to a contingent world of work has meant seeing such kin-favouring norms as a commonsensical reaction to a world in which work is a scarce resource while this acceptance of scarcity comes to instill a mercenarial attitude towards work:

> I would say, the reality of getting a good job without a family connection or someone that works on the inside, someone that works with Nova Scotia Power or whatever, it need not matter how much education you have or how sharp or intelligent or how hard working you are. When opportunities are scarce, very, very, scarce, a family connection is what you need for help. And it would be like that anywhere in the world. If I had a good job and my sister's boy couldn't find work, I mean, when times are really tough, you have to look after your own first. So, I'd say to a young person, if you're really set on staying in Cape Breton, you have to use your contacts to give yourself a chance. And if you don't have contacts and you can't make them, you'd better be prepared to move someplace where there's opportunities.

On one hand, the presence of such Fordist-style working relations introduced components of a Fordist class identity to the broader populace and introduced the concepts and

[60] Barber (2002a) also makes note of Cape Breton's "kin-favouring norms" which gives certain people advantages while simultaneously resulting in the exclusion of others.

benefits of modern labour relations to Industrial Cape Breton (such as the advantages of unionization and collective bargaining). Yet this split between those in secure, stable work relations and those in precarious work relations did produce substantial social divisions within the region with such Fordist-style jobs representing an increasingly unattainable ideal form of labour among a broader population working "lesser" jobs (Haiven 2009: 198).[61]

Within this expanding second group employed in unstable and precarious work relations, periods of unemployment, underemployment and mobile work trajectories developed as expected and accepted aspects of life. DeRoche, in her ethnography of a Cape Breton Island village, notes how villagers' work lives were characterized by short periods of intense, demanding manual labour consisting of local seasonal employment and sojourns to construction work in eastern United States and parts of Canada interspersed with long periods of unemployment. The village members' view of work-life, DeRoche notes, differs from a Protestant-style work ethic where full-time, steady employment is valorized. The individuals of this community are described as instead having developed a "tolerance for instability" where unsure access to employment is not seen as a stop-gap measure or problematic but simply the consequence of living in an economically "difficult" region (1987).

[61] Of course, this description is not to undermine the experiences of coal miners and millworkers. Such industrial work is understood as among the most dangerous types of work in Canada while Cape Breton industrial workers were proportionally paid less compared to others doing similar work in other parts of Canada. However, it is a statement about the work conditions of Cape Breton and the types of work to which people are conditioned to accept when coal mining, globally recognized as one of the most difficult, dangerous and "dirty" of manual jobs (Stalker 2000), is locally considered an elite occupation available only to a select few.

Among my informants, periods of unemployment were seen as a common and unavoidable occurrence and many noted the need to both develop multiple and wide-ranging breadth of talents and skills to both obtain future employment and to reduce reliance on market-based transactions while such periods of unemployment were utilised to learn varieties of skills or undertake formal training. For instance, Gladys explained to me how her husband, who had been working in the Oil Sands for several years, was able to apply his "jack-of-all-trades" mentality (Barber 1990) to secure work out West:

> Oh, he worked in the woods but he does everything, he can fix a car, build a house. He'll go out there and do anything, be a baker, do maintenance. Labourer, anything he can do. And he says, if he can get there for a year, he can make the money.

In a similar vein, Rick relates how his experiences of contingent work in Cape Breton have made him a much more adaptable worker than most in the Albertan context:

> Yeah, so I painted this big church up in Cape North. Then, a guy got hurt in a car accident, so I lobster-fished for him for a summer. I did pretty much anything that would pay a few bucks. Sold used cars for a bit. Yeah, I worked a bit as a carpenter, framing houses. I worked for a call centre for a short time. I guess I got a pretty wide skill set, like many people in Cape Breton have. Because one set of skills will not keep you employed in Cape Breton. So I come here with a pretty decent basket of skills. And they consider this a slow time in Alberta. Well, it's the land of opportunities compared to home.

Such experiences and expectations of frequent unemployment and the need to constantly re-educate oneself prepare one to accept neoliberal logics which demand such flexibility and adaptability in the workforce. While this second group of Cape Breton workers excluded from Fordist relations had, throughout the twentieth century, adapted strategies of flexibility towards a precarious world of work, the Fordist-style workers employed in the coal mills and mines did not share this adaptive relation to the world of

work. With the decline and closing of the region's major industries at the turn of the 21st century, the distinction between these two groups collapsed and the former industrialized blue-collar workers found themselves unemployed and seemingly without options to find similar secure employment in the future.

The circumstances of industrial closure were not passively accepted.[62] Community outrage led to protest with the March of Concern in the year 2000 (echoing the protest of the same name in 1967 which led to the steel mill being nationalized) rallying through the streets of Sydney to oppose the loss of central industry. Residents mobilized to form United Families, a group which succeeded in pressuring the federal government to offer financial compensation and severance packages for the newly unemployed miners and steel mill workers (Morgan 2009). As a result of such acts of mobilization, workers recently expelled from these Fordist relations were offered various compensation packages, ranging from early retirement to severance payment agreements depending on a worker's length of employment in these industries.

---

[62] DeRoche (2002) notes that community economic development literature examining economic decline in Industrial Cape Breton has often relied on a culture of dependency argument to examine regional economic decline. As this dependency argument goes, the population, made up predominantly of working-class miners, operated under a situation in which the Company controlled, owned and operated local employment, housing and stores. This set of circumstances engendered a paternalistic relationship to the Company while stifling local entrepreneurship and innovation. When the mines and mill were nationalised, this dependency was then transferred onto the Federal and Provincial governments which took control of these industries. As DeRoche explains such descriptions while unfortunately continuing to inform community economic development approaches, wrongly projects an air of passivity over the populations of Industrial Cape Breton, ignores surrounding historical and economic connections beyond Industrial Cape Breton, along with Industrial Cape Breton's strong history of resistance to processes of capital through labour strikes, strong support for local trades union and other acts of non acquiescence. I also recommend Barber's 2002b chapter, aptly titled "Militant Particularism and Cultural Struggles as Cape Breton Burns Again" examining the acts of resistance when local workers burned the Company stores, locally know as "pluck-me's", in an act of worker rebellion.

Yet such actions did little to mitigate the fact that the region had nonetheless lost its central industries. Anger spilled over not from just the newly unemployed workers affected but from the larger community who were severely impacted by the loss of the region's defining industry. In many ways such closures represented not simply the loss of employment for a relatively small section of the population but rather the loss of normative orientation in the community (*cf.* Dagenais 2008). Even for those excluded from such work arrangements, the closure of the mines represented the loss of the blue-collar ideal as the very possibility of Fordist industrial work exited the region. The former "working man's towns" in Industrial Cape Breton were left struggling to redefine themselves in a post-industrial environment. One informant describes the closures as though "the heart and soul of Cape Breton has really been ripped out", a feeling which continues to be widespread in the region. Meanwhile, tangible economic impacts were felt as many individuals and families struggled to support themselves while at the turn of the 21st century the fastest growing industries in Industrial Cape Breton were food banks and family counselling (Morgan 2009).

This move from the security offered through a Fordist form of employment to a precarious and contingent world of work was a difficult and bitter situation for many former industrial workers and their families to accept. This period in which workers were expected to discard former blue-collar identities and adjust to the new "knowledge economy" of post-industrialization—to effectively relinquish Fordist classed identities and their concomitant subjective elements and assume the neoliberalized classed subjectivities required to adapt to a world of contingent work—entailed a profound and

difficult redefinition of what one expects to obtain from one's relation to work and a redefinition of what the labour process is supposed to offer to the worker and the worker's self-identity.

While the period of Fordism was relatively short, scarcely enduring more than a generation (Sennett 1999), this particular form of relating to the world of work had substantial impacts on identity and subjectivity formation. Fordism as Gramsci (1971) underlined, extended beyond simply being a production technique and came to be a societal form fundamentally shaping lives beyond the factory floor. Material standards of living did rise for many during this period, the idea of stable life-long jobs became normalised and certain conceptions of self identity and family formation such as the concept of the male head of a nuclear household with "breadwinner" status, came to be formed (Dagenais 2008). While the transition away from Fordism may allow for new iterations of gendered identities and a move away from certain patriarchal relations in the home (Ahmed *et al* 2003; Dunk and Bartol 2005), it also entails loss of normative orientation in regards to conceptions of identity and family dynamics as "a chapter closes on the forms of masculine identity that carefully intertwined work and fatherhood" (Broughton and Walton 2006: 10). Bill rather adeptly states how this situation relates to his experience of not only losing his job during the closures but also the profound family transformations that went hand-in-hand with being replaced as the "breadwinner":

> I was dependent on the primary income of my wife. Which was a very difficult transition. Men are very attached to their employment and it defines who they are. My wife's helped me greatly and redefining who I am has been much more than what my job is. And I think men especially have some real difficulty with that. When the job disappears, you don't know who you are any more.

An exceptionally difficult component of this transition, for many, was relinquishing the idea that one's relation to work can allow one a degree of control and predictability over the future, the "narrative movement" (Sennett 2006: 183-184) through which one can chart one's life. A stable work environment offers a degree of stability in other areas of life and the capacity to hold a modicum of control over one's future and one's sense of self-identity (Sennett 1998, 2006). As Sider point out, most people have a desire for such continuity, in having "today being more or less like both yesterday and tomorrow" (2006: 257) which becomes a set of circumstances increasingly uncommon in a contingent work world. For many of these workers, this was a painful period of adaptation and acceptance of the loss of a work situation providing not only financial stability but also the ability to map out future direction, as such lives came to be instead marked by sets of unpredictable "ruptures" (Sider 2006).

Margaret and Stan struggled to readjust when Stan, after twenty years working in the mines and in his mid-50s, was one such worker who lost his job in the closures. With little savings, a small severance package and a family house worth little in a period marked by profound regional decline and out-migration, Stan accepted a package from the federal government that allowed him to enter re-training to upgrade his skills in the trades. While many others had chosen to out-migrate from the area, relocating did not seem to be an option as neither his wife Margaret nor he wanted to remove the household from the social connections and familiarity of home and community. In 2003, contractual employment in the Oil Sands arose as the only foreseeable opportunity to provide a

livelihood for his family while maintaining these connections to home. Margaret angrily and tearfully explained the frustrations of losing this stability and accepting a life of precarious employment and the impacts that this had on their family and their own relationship as they both, by this point in their early 60s, had to rapidly redefine the life they had anticipated:

> The mines was a job you could retire on! And many people did! And then they gave them this severance that they pretty much friggin' well have kept! The severance meant that he couldn't, he wasn't eligible for EI [*employment insurance*] for two years. So that severance money had to do us for two years and not only that, when it was paid out, unless you invested most of it, you lost this huge amount of money in taxes. So, what did the severance get you? I mean, if you put it in retirement, you're fine. It doesn't feed you today though.
>
> For two years, we lived on very little. He was looking for work. I mean, his training was paid for, of course but his ability to support his family was very diminished. [...] And now, well, it's, it's just a shame that at our age and time in life, that we have to do this. You know? At a time in your life when you think you kind of made it and you can relax more with your partner and enjoy each other more, there's this big ripple where he's not there for periods of time while he's away. That's kind of the injustice.

Following the industrial closures, early retirement packages were offered for employees with over twenty-five years of service while severance pay and retraining courses known as "bridging programs" were offered to others. A federal government employee related how, as an employment counsellor at the local branch of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, her position quickly changed following the early 2000s closures, from aiding the occasional client with a job search or processing an unemployment insurance claim to, practically overnight, putting together programs to offer widespread retraining for the thousands who had lost their jobs. During this time, she and her branch coworkers as representatives of the Federal government, became a

target and focal point for much of the anger and outrage that was forthcoming in a seemingly hopeless period for the region:

> I had to have security guards in the office to protect me. [...] It was like a dark cloud was over the place. They'd worked in these industries since they were twelve or thirteen years old, some of them and here they are thirty or forty or fifty years old and what are they going to do? We can't retrain them and get them back in school, because that would take them six years just to get their grade twelve, right? And another three years to get them into a trade. So we had to work on getting fast upgrading, like GED and getting them into basic trades....A lot of them just gave up.

Those that did go through retraining in the trades remarked that the federal government had arranged to retrain them for industrial jobs that simply did not exist locally. For many, the "retraining" was not actually about acquiring new skills but rather having pre-existing skills formally recognized. Margaret's husband, Stan, for instance, had worked as a self-trained mechanic through most of the 1960s and 1970s and found employment in the mines in the late 1970s as an industrial mechanic. He underwent the government bridging program and was entered into millwright training in a local vocational school. Stan completed his training in two years, finding himself in the ironic situation that he was finally trained and officially certified to do the work that he had been doing in the mines for the past two decades but without any increased opportunity to find local work.

This period of retraining came to actually provide employment for some. Mike, who had been a member of the second grouping of workers employed irregularly, had become habituated to cyclical periods of employment. Throughout much of his working career, he had worked as a painter, labourer, amateur electrician and, during periods of unemployment, trained himself in various computer software applications. Among the goals of the government bridging programs was to train manual workers to adjust to the

new "knowledge economy", the policy buzzword which referred to the post-industrial economy that would ostensibly come to replace the mines and mills of Industrial Cape Breton. Mike's background knowledge in software applications allowed him to secure a contract to train former coal miners and former steel workers in basic computer literacy and internet job search skills. The goals of this computer literacy program as Mike explained, were to allow workers to gain the skills they needed to take personal responsibility for their own employment-searching in the new post-industrial economy:

> [I was] helping struggling people find hope and opportunity. I really enjoyed it. A lot of these guys, maybe they never finished high school or whatever. So, it was kind of like a re-entry for a self-directed life.

Both Sennett (2006) and Dunk (2002) emphasize that a primary focus of neoliberal practices and processes is disciplining workers to accept certain aspects of neoliberal logics: to accept a casualization of work, an acceptance of responsibilities once held by the employer (such as retirement benefits or a secure livelihood) and to accept an individuated view of one's relation to the greater economy in which one's state of employment or unemployment comes to be seen as an individualized matter of personal responsibility rather than being a function of the larger social and economic processes in which one lives. Dunk's ethnographic example is remarkably similar to the case of Industrial Cape Breton and other single-industry regions undergoing processes of deindustrialization. He examines the situation surrounding the closing of a pulp mill in a northern Ontario community where unionized, well-paid workers were retrained to accept their new locations in the global labour market and the "new economy". The former millworkers enter an "adjustment program" ostensibly designed to help them re-enter the

labour market, where they learn (or, more aptly, are disciplined) to not blame the pulp mill company for closing its doors but rather to "let go" of the past in order to move on. In the process such workers come to accept individual responsibility for not adapting more quickly to the changing economic conditions and learn to take on a self-managed and self-directed entrepreneurial relation to their subsequent job search. The main implicit focus of this retraining was to serve as "attitude adjustment" and the teaching of "market discipline" to such unemployed workers (Dunk 2002: 883). In other words, they were disciplined to accept neoliberal ideology. Dunk sets this discussion to examine the change in worker subjectivities from Fordism to neoliberalism. Under Fordism, Tayloristic principles sought (although did not necessarily succeed) to homogenise workers, training them to be interchangeable, dependable and machine-like parts of a collectivity on the factory floor. In the switch to neoliberalism, workers are taught to adjust, monitor and manage themselves, to become individual, adaptive, creative and moreover to exercise the flexibility required by the market in the contemporary era.

Yet, in the case of retraining in Industrial Cape Breton, the trainers themselves were familiar with the precarious world of work for which they were training the former miners and mill workers and saw this world of work as a poor substitute for the Fordist work relations from which they themselves had been excluded. To return to the experiences of Mike, this particular trainer related to me the difficult and conflicted situation he found himself in. He himself had spent most of his working life shifting from short-term job to short-term job and highly doubted a "knowledge economy" would develop in Industrial Cape Breton or that such an economy would have use for the former

miners and millworkers. While at times he enjoyed how his courses gave "hope" to unemployed industrial workers, he found himself in what he described as the bitterly dishonest position of reassuring such workers that the skills he imparted upon them would directly help them in finding new sources of employment. Meanwhile, he personally had no idea what he would do for employment once his indeterminate contract as a trainer expired. In retrospect eight years after the fact, Mike was able to appreciate the irony that, having taught the computer literacy and computer job-search skills training program for two years, he found himself once more unemployed and sitting in the career counselling office next to the same men that he had trained.

Industrial Cape Breton's post-industrial role in the "knowledge economy" soon became clear with local government development agencies in the early to mid 2000s succeeding in attracting new business in the area in the form of call centres. Gibbs and Leech (2009) note how the region fit the requirements for the call centre industry. Unlike manufacturing which can be globally mobile, call centres are limited by language requirements and require English-speaking populations willing to accept the low pay, isolating work environment and tedious nature of such service work. "Consequently, to locate the cheapest English-speaking workforce they often seek out the most economically depressed areas of North America. Cities and towns experiencing industrial decline fit the bill perfectly" (2009: 76).

Few former miners or mill workers made the shift to working in Industrial Cape Breton's newly constructed call centres and those that did often did not last long. Fred, below, describes how he made such an attempt by taking employment as a service

representative in a newly opened call centre before opting to begin working out West, but only lasted three months before quitting what he described as a "modern day sweat shop":

> I don't think it's in many people to be able to last in that sort of environment. I mean, to be in a room with two hundred other people and to be so alone without any support is kind of nonsense because you get none of the social benefits of working with other people. It's you, a computer and a bunch of softwares that are unfriendly towards one another. [...] But everyone is working as independent workers, all by themselves. You can't say, excuse me, I've never done this before, could you help me out with it? Well, what you could do is put a panicked look on your face and put your hand up and wave to the tech support person. [...] I'd say two thirds [*working in the call centre were*] young people, who I felt really bad for, 'cause, they like to get you young, because you won't tell them to jump off a short pier,[63] because you don't know what's normal to be asked of at work and what's ridiculous to asked of. And I probably jumped ship because I could recognize that this was just insanity what they were trying to get us to do there.

During this period of industrial closure and worker retraining in Industrial Cape Breton, construction, production and expansion was taking place on a grand scale five thousand kilometres to the west in the Oil Sands region. While the industry had seen little growth in between the 1970s up to the mid-1990s, the policies put in place based on the recommendations of the 1995 Alberta Chamber of Resources report put into effect a business-friendly tax and royalty schemes to encourage development, had a much more intense impact than initially expected, causing investment in the Oil Sands and resultant expansions to skyrocket (le Riche 2006). With the local labour pool essentially utilized at near-maximum capacity Oil Sands industries required additional sources of labour in order to continue expansion and production unabated. As fortune would have it,

[63] A local expression meant to dismiss someone rudely, similar to "get lost".

coinciding with this period, Industrial Cape Breton and many other sites within Atlantic Canada presented themselves as viable pools of reserve labour. Such sites would come to play a vital role in allowing this industry to expand and shift from obscurity to becoming a central component of Canada's economy in little more than a decade. With northern Alberta industries claiming to be suffering from massive labour shortages, thousands of Atlantic Canada workers, conditioned through a variety of factors to be accepting and grateful for such opportunities, became aware and connected to such work opportunities through a variety of factors.

Institutional, Relational and Infrastructural Factors in the Long-Distance Commute

As global oil prices rose over the late 1990s and early 2000s prompting further investment in Oil Sands industries, expansions continued to require increasing numbers of workers. As Chapter Four explored, the work-camp population of Wood Buffalo Regional Municipality of temporary workers underwent dramatic growth during this time period, growing from 3 568 in 1999 to 26 284 in 2008, an increase of 737 per cent (WBRM 2010 and 2008), before then falling to 23 325 in 2010.

Chapter Four explored factors within the Oil Sands region which allowed for the area to emerge as a large-scale receiver of temporary labour such as the adoption of project-based work organization and the connected sub-contractor system, along with the construction of physical infrastructures to house incoming workers on a temporary basis. Similarly, in Industrial Cape Breton confluences of interconnected factors have allowed the region to effectively function as a sending region. In Atlantic Canada, by 2009, over

12 000 have been estimated to have out-migrated to the Oil Sands region either indeterminately or as sojourners while at least an equal number commuting back and forth between Atlantic Canada and the Oil Sands on a regular basis (Gibbs and Leech 2009).

Beyond processes which instill workers with the motivations to subjectively accept conditions of mobile work, there are a number of factors which interact to enable circuits of migration to emerge and persist and which allow this region to function effectively as an area of reserve mobile labour. Stark has noted that migration has a dialectical effect in which "migratory outcomes are fed back into and modify the very market environments that stimulated migration" (1991:4), and that the presence of migration can alter and impact the conditions which created and allowed for such connections in the first place. While the development of particular subjectivities willing to accept conditions of precarious mobile labour have been instrumental in connecting these two regions together, there are also a number of concomitant elements which interact in allowing such connections to emerge, persist and expand. The following section considers such elements such as the network-mediated migration realized through both personal and formal relationships, the presence of the Employment Insurance system and connections to home and community which by conversely resisting aspects of neoliberal logics, come to reinforce other aspects of such logics.

Information regarding migration routes flow through various forms of networks. Such networks allow individuals to learn about and access the various resources needed for migration routes to take form: allowing individuals to access certain job opportunities,

to learn about transportation strategies, to secure accommodation abroad and additionally to stay informed of which job opportunities and accommodation options to avoid. Thus, migration is not a singular or individual event, of one individual leaving a place and moving to another place. Rather, it involves ongoing connections that are formed and maintained among people located in a variety of places. Those ongoing relationships have consequences for those who move and for those who stay behind, they have implications for the home community and the destination community while these connections lead to the formation of social networks that span specific communities and societies (Brettell 2003; Trager 2005: 19).

Network-mediated migration has emerged as a replacement term for chain migration (Masey 1987) which allows for an appreciation of the circulation of information about migrant opportunities through social relations (Castles and Miller 1998; Olwig 2007). Networks allow potential migrants to know about opportunities and to be able to access resources once they arrive to destination, in short, allowing current and potential migrants to access the social capital (Reimer *et al* 2008) which allows for successful mobile labour trajectories to emerge and persist.

Family and community become crucial in such networks. Olwig (2007) has noted that families often play a key role in instigating mobility. In other cases, migration patterns may come to be formed through external factors at the onset but then come to be integrated into networks as such opportunities are transmitted through social relations. The case of undocumented Mexican migrant workers in the Southern United States' agricultural industry is a prime example of such. Such patterns of migration originated

with the governmental *Bracero* managed migration program in the 1940s which as such work opportunities and migration information was transmitted through various social networks (Martin 2003) grew into its own transnational circuit (Rouse 1991) of labour migration. Migration patterns do not necessarily remain static and change and shift over periods of time. From a longitudinal perspective such patterns make unanticipated formations as in the case of generational Mexican agricultural workers coming to become a structural necessity in the Arkansas meat-processing industry as seasonal migrations shift to indeterminate residency (Striffler 2007). Migration patterns emerge as such movements become seemingly self-perpetuating; once migration becomes a possibility for some within a social network others begin to follow such "beaten paths" (Castles and Miller 1998: 26). In short, to summarize:

> Networks based on family or on common place of origin help provide shelter, work assistance, in coping with bureaucratic procedures, and support in personal difficulties. These social networks make the migratory process safer and more manageable for the migrants and their families. Migratory movements, once started, become self-sustaining social processes (Castles and Miller 1998: 26).

Network-mediated migration, in perhaps its most extreme iteration, becomes expressed ostensibly as a "culture of migration" (Cohen and Sirkeci 2011) in which such movements within a sending region become so commonplace and so integrated within social networks as to become hegemonic and normative; as taken for granted, accepted and anticipated sets of events that regularly occur in the everyday lives of a community.

As mentioned previously, kinship relations In Industrial Cape Breton have long been a frequent route towards securing labour locally. The same strategies of utilizing

kin-favouring networks which allowed workers to access labour locally in Industrial Cape Breton come to connect individuals with distant work processes as well: introducing and familiarizing individuals with the initial idea of out West opportunities, allowing workers to secure a job in the oil sands before venturing out and/or providing a networks of friends and family already living in Fort McMurray in order to find a temporary place to stay and to find employment once in the Oil Sands region.

Similarly, utilizing networks became a fundamental aspect of my fieldwork. Six months into my period in Industrial Cape Breton, I began to prepare to travel to the Oil Sands. By this time, I had made a number of social contacts in the region and my experiences of coming to be connected to opportunities out West closely followed the trajectories taken by many first-time long distance commuters. An informant connected me with an acquaintance living in Fort McMurray, who, along with his wife, rented rooms of their house to temporary workers. Yet, when I contacted Jessica and John-Neil, all of their available rooms were unfortunately rented. However as a "friend of a friend", the couple generously allowed me to stay on their living room couch during my first few weeks in northern Alberta and played a key role as interlocutors in introducing me to life in Fort McMurray. During my first few days in Fort McMurray, I quickly learned about the couple's role in facilitating Cape Breton long-distance commutes. Acting as an entry point for friends, relatives and other acquaintances had become a common situation for the couple during the course of their eight years in Fort McMurray while John-Neil often joked about how the drive to the bus station or to the airport had practically become a monthly ritual: "Y'know, I can't remember how many Cape Bretoners I've picked up

from that airport". Meanwhile, they (and their couch) had played a central role as a jumping-off point for people from Cape Breton looking for work in Fort McMurray by providing a temporary place to stay, connecting people to Oil Sands job opportunities and by helping to orient newcomers to life in Fort McMurray.

As a result, their house served as something of a social hub for temporary workers and workers who had relocated from Cape Breton, either temporarily or on an indeterminate basis and underlined the self-reinforcing nature of such instances of network-mediated migration. For instance, during my stay, one of their lodgers, a young electrical apprentice from Sydney Mines, unexpectedly lost his job at one of the larger industrial sites. While he briefly considered returning home, his streak of unemployment only lasted several days with one of John-Neil and Jessica's past lodgers connecting him with a job opportunity with a local sub-contracting company.

Social connections and the flow of stories and experiences of migrations between generations also play a profound role in the normalization of migration. Labour migrations have been part of the historical context of Cape Breton with people from the region having a long tradition of supplying other areas with temporary labour: the prairies in the early twentieth century during harvest time (MacKenzie 2002), New England during the nineteenth and twentieth century construction booms (DeRoche 1987; Hornsby 1989) with Toronto (Morgan 2009) and out West rising in prominence in the late twentieth century as temporary, semi-permanent and permanent destinations. Margaret explained that in the 1970s, for those that couldn't find work in the mines, Toronto was the popular and expected destination for out-migrants with the idea to leave

for a period of time, work and save money before returning home to Cape Breton to "begin" life. These patterns of migration to the Oil Sands are commonly perceived as following in the same tradition.

> Well, it was the '70s. Everybody was going to Ontario. It's really no different. The only difference today, it's parents who are going elsewhere to find work. In those days, it was young people that were going. But now, it's the parents who are forced to find work and they're leaving behind their families which is very difficult. When it was young people going, well, it was young people who were not married, newly married, maybe had a small child, you know.

Such acceptance plays a role in obscuring the more institutionalized aspects of labour migration, leading to the proportionally larger numbers of migrants within these labour movements being overlooked as such movements come to be seen as the continuation of historical and accepted conditions rather than a novel occurrence[64].

Network-mediated migration has tended to only consider personal and intimate relations such as family and friend social networks that play a role in mediating migration (Castle and Mills 1998). Yet associative and professional networks also play a large role in facilitating migration.[65] In Industrial Cape Breton, trade unions have come to play a fundamental role in connecting workers and mediating labour mobility between the two

---

[64] This often arose in my fieldwork when informants would question why I was bothering to examine the commute in the first place. One informant, after spending several hours telling me his fascinating story of migration which began in the Oil Sands in the 1970s and continued on for forty years, ended by telling me how common and uninteresting his story was and regretfully informed me that the book I was working on would probably not be very interesting. He helpfully suggested that looking at the decline of the fisheries in Industrial Cape Breton would make for a more exciting read.

[65] For instance, George's 2005 ethnography examines how professional networks and university associations not only provide migration opportunities for Kerala nurses to access employment in the medical sector of the United States, such networks also play a key role in "priming" such future migrants in assuming migration to be the only feasible career path.

regions. Canadian trade unions have been successful in ensuring that large-scale industrial developments employ unionized tradespeople, although this is an issue of contestation which is continuously taking place and being re-negotiated (Russell 1999). Although there are a large number of non-unionized jobs in the Oil Sands region with certain sub-contractors hiring non-union and particularly Syncrude holding an official policy as being a non-union company (le Riche 2006), trade unions have been successful in ensuring that a majority of the skilled trades work in the Oil Sands region is carried out by unionized workers[66].

A majority of Oil Sands industries and sub-contractors recruit workers directly through Albertan unions. In times when a specific union local is unable to meet the numbers of workers requested of it by an industry, it is able to request workers from other union locals, known as "putting out a call". Union locals will coordinate their efforts to send labour to where it is desired, allowing, for instance, the Albertan branch of the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters to temporarily recruit workers from the Cape Breton local and other locals throughout Canada. During the boom period of 2003 to 2008, many Albertan trade union locals simply did not have the numbers of available skilled workers which Oil Sands companies and sub-contractors requested and placing Canada-wide or region-specific calls to other affiliated union locals became common practice.

[66] This is an issue of ongoing tension, with many of my informants in Industrial Cape Breton discussing with me in great length the various attempts made by Oil Sands companies to import temporary foreign workers which local unions attest is a way to diminish union power. Other issues have included the formations of "alternative" pro-business trades unions which many trade unionists report as an attempt by industry to circumvent traditional unions.

During this period, it became common for a union local in Industrial Cape Breton to have an ongoing and active list of positions available forwarded by their Albertan counterparts. As a mechanism to ensure fair access to employment opportunities, trade unions maintain a system of job "bidding" in order to connect workers to job openings. Unions maintain priority lists known as "the books", where a worker's position in "the books" indicates when he last worked. If a worker had recently taken a job, his name would be at the top of the list. As workers below him on the list took jobs and are subsequently placed on the top of the list, a worker's name will work its way down a list. The lower one's number and hence the longer one has been unemployed, the more priority that particular person has in obtaining a job through the union. Workers apply to a specific job by "bidding" on that opportunity with the job opportunity typically awarded to the member with the lowest number on the books. An informant explained the process succinctly in the following terms:

> There's a board. If I just finished a job and I come home, my number goes to 3500. So as everybody takes a job, my number drops. So, say, right now, my number's at 1400. Now, I'll bid on a job. But if you're lower and bid, you'll get the job. I'll bid on a job and I won't know until all the bids are in. OK, Danny got the job, he's at 1300.

During the peak of the boom period, unionized workers had for the most part a rather secure source of work, albeit working on shifting projects with new work teams during each contract. During this period there was little feeling of precarity for unionized workers. Unions quickly circulated through their lists of workers and provided employment for members willing to work out West. A heavy equipment operator explained to me how he could complete a contract and return home confident in his

ability to secure work out West with ease: "I'd come home, take a few days, a few weeks off. Then, just call the union hall and put my name on the board. They'd have me workin' in a few days."

Various jobs are more or less desirable and attract higher or lower numbers of bids accordingly. Such job packages may or may not include extra incentives such as paid lodging, either in the form of work-camp accommodations or living-out allowances (which are funds to rent accommodations in Fort McMurray), paid airline transportation, favourable contract lengths and opportunities for work arrangements such as the "twenty-one and seven" which allow workers opportunities to come home for brief periods during their work contract.

Because of the relative security they offer and the associated benefits and higher levels of access to subsidized transportation and/or accommodation in the Oil Sands, union-mediated work in the oil sands has represented the most desirable working option for the majority of informants. One aspect of migration that been brought up in discussions on the impacts of remittances as a form of regional development for sending communities (Brettell 2003) is that it is not necessarily the most desperate or the most economically marginalized who embark on paths of migration. Rather it is those who have the resources and connections to successfully partake in such patterns of mobile labour (Bauder 2006). In one respect, differences between members of unions and those who had to rely solely on personal networks created a two-tiered mobile labour market: one tier consisting of unionized workers in relatively stable and secure organized patterns of back-and-forth movements and a second in much more precarious, ad hoc movements

often consisting of longer sojourns in Fort McMurray and less desirable work opportunities with more chances of experiencing periods of unemployment:

> But you gotta remember Nelson, there's a lot of guys that want to get out there and work but they can't get in the union. And you don't want to get out there without a union. You'd starve.

While trade unions have proved very beneficial for their members, they nonetheless operate through principles of exclusion, attempting to exert control in the labour market through controlling the market's access to skilled labour (Fairbrother and Waddington 1990). A union's concern is to ensure that its existing members have sufficient work and thus, entering unions for many excluded from these relations in Industrial Cape Breton has proven difficult. Many informants have noted that nepotism and kin-favouring relations still control access to the local unions. Tim, who, despite the "books being full" and the union not opening its doors to new members for a number of years, was able to enter a Cape Breton union with the help of an acquaintance in the union.

> And yeah with the union, if the books are full, it's who you know. Some people were still getting in, through the back door sort of thing. So, you just keep your mouth shut and a lot of people are still getting in today. It's just that well, it's who you know.

In many ways, the long-distance commute has recreated the aristocracy of labour (Haiven 2009) that divided workers during the Fordist period of industry in Industrial Cape Breton. However, rather than existing on a regional scale this new hierarchy of labour divides workers through access to more desirable forms of mobility.

While union-mediated migration may be more desirable for workers, with the enhanced benefits that come with union protection, along with extra incentives such as

paid transportation and accommodation rarely offered to non-unionized workers, the lines between these two streams are not clear-cut. Rather, workers reported frequently using union-mediated migration whenever feasible but also using personal networks to secure (often covertly) alternative, non-unionized employment in times when unionized job opportunities had lessened. Eddy relates how he had originally joined a Cape Breton union through the assistance of a friend primarily in order to access work in the Oil Sands. When the union was no longer able to arrange work for him out West, he utilized his own personal networks to access resources needed for transportation and accommodation out West:

> Arnold came through and helped me get into the Union.[...] So I talked with other guys and they're making good money, especially living in a camp, everything's paid for. So I started going out West. [*First time I went out*] it was May 2007. That was the CNRL project. And that was a 3 year project and I hooked the tail end of it, got the last 4 months. They were going on-line, up and running. And then I came home and drew unemployment and that's when the recession hit big time. Nothing on the board. And so and so I drove out West last year, in January. By myself! Because my sister lives in Fort Mac. A young fellow came home and bought a truck here, he had to fly back right away. He wanted his truck out there and I got wind of it, so he said, if you drive my truck out there, I'll pay for it, all your bills and expenses. So, basically, it was a free trip out there. Plus, my sister lives out there. I thought my chances of finding work out there would be better if I was out there. So that's what I did. I'd never do it again, it was winter time and it was brutal. But I was lucky[...]Took me weeks to find something. Then it was two and a half months that I was working out there, before I came back.

Trades unions have admittedly had issues in adapting to a neoliberalised world (Russell 1999) and understandably so, since they have been effectively targeted by neoliberal reforms which purposely attempts to reduce labour power through instilling practices of flexibility upon the labour force (Harvey 2001, 2005, 2010). One informant, who had been in an Industrial Cape Breton trade union for over forty years, argued that

trades unions had essentially been reduced to the role of a temp agency, serving to connect labour to labour opportunities.

> Unions, they got their good points but have their bad points too. They can be good or can be really bad, pushing guys too hard. They keep the wages up and that but, I don't know, they [*the work site]* can't just fire you for no reason. But the way the laws are today, you got just as much rights, the rights to refuse [*unsafe work conditions*], so there's not really much for them to do. The unions they had twenty years ago ain't like the ones today. Don't tell anyone, any union guys this, though, 'cause they'll argue with you, 'cause you're paying dues. So they'll fight you tooth and nail.

As such, this may not be so much an issue of unions failing to respond but rather how certain neoliberalized practices have contributed to weakening of organized labour power. An issue then to be underlined is how the fragmentation of the labour force through individuated mobile work trajectories and limited term projects has effectively crippled many concepts of collectivities which make unions function.

An unanticipated yet vital component in maintaining Industrial Cape Breton as a region of reserve labour power is the presence of the Employment Insurance (EI) system. Canada's federally managed unemployment benefits program had its early roots as a safety net for the unemployed when Keynesian-style reforms were being established throughout the country in the 1940s[67] (Cuneo 1979; Pal 1988). Employers and employees contribute to a centrally managed fund from which the recently unemployed can draw financial benefits for a defined period of time. A central underlying concept of EI is that employees become unemployed through no fault of their own and an unemployment benefits program provides a financial support system for workers in times of capital

[67] From 1940 until 1996, the program was known as the Unemployment Insurance program and changed to Employment Insurance in 1996

flight, technological change and recession while EI is said to be a key element in maintaining a certain level of equality in Canada (Brooks and Miljan 2003).

The relation of Employment Insurance to the labour market is a reoccurring and multifaceted discussion with some claiming that its presence creates labour market distortions and prevents the logics of the market place from connecting labour to where labour is needed while others underline that it is an essential component in insuring that employers offer a certain baseline in terms of providing fair working conditions to attract employees.[68] Changes to the EI system, which tightened regulations, reduced the amount of time one can draw benefits and limited who can be eligible for such benefits, have been seen principally as ways of actualizing otherwise latent pools of reserve labour. The 1996 reforms to the system, which saw the program rebranded from Unemployment Insurance to Employment Insurance, is one instance of such:

> The principal benefit to corporations of EI restructuring was the establishment of a surplus pool of cheap labour as the unemployed had to re-enter the job market sooner than they previously would have. This inevitably created more competition for existing jobs and drove down wages in many sectors. (Gibbs and Leech 2009: 39)

Meanwhile, critics of the Employment Insurance system[69] (*cf.* Cuneo 1979; Pal 1988) have noted that its existence allows for systematic seasonal unemployment and the

---

[68] This has played out in the media over the past number of years. See for instance the following newspaper articles:
"Sweeping EI crackdown to target repeat benefit claimants" *National Post*, May 24 2012.
"Employment Insurance: As provinces balk at EI changes, Flaherty says let's talk" *Globe and Mail*, May 25 2012.
"EI is Broken – It's Time to Fix It!" *Canadian Labour Congress*, April 28 2009.
"Make EI Work." *National Post*, May 23 2009.

[69] See newspaper articles in previous footnote for examples.

prevention of push-pull labour migration dynamics from occurring in which labour market fundamentals induce individuals to relocate from low employment regions to areas where labour is in demand (Martin 2003). As this argument follows, the presence of Employment Insurance eliminates a certain degree of necessitated worker flexibility, preventing workers from engaging in labour mobility and from taking on less than desirable work opportunities.

Such arguments frequently take on a regional component, particularly in regards to the Atlantic Provinces with these regions' historically higher rates of unemployment and seasonal employment in fishing, forestry and tourism for which there is no work in the winter (Brooks and Miljan 2003). Each of my informants who had held temporary employment in the past five years had been an EI claimant during at least one point during that period and descriptions of going on EI were presented as the logical conclusion to the termination of a contract, akin to receiving a severance package. Meanwhile, EI payments represent a fundamental aspect of household finances. For many, money saved through work out West is used for large purchases or expenses, for instance house repairs, funding a child's education, or paying off debts while EI is utilized for the everyday maintenance of the household.

Meanwhile, some have noted how collecting EI has become an essential expectation in the region. A Human Resources and Skills Development Canada clerk quoted below aired her somewhat jaded frustrations that, for many, it had become commonsensical to simply preclude the possibility of local employment following the end of a contract out West:

> The young ones, they go out there and they live paycheck to paycheck. They blow all their money drinking and partying. Or buying fifty, sixty thousand dollar trucks. I've seen them come in, they drive down from Fort McMurray, park in the parking lot and apply for EI before they've even got home.

I would argue that many critics of Employment Insurance have overly focused on the individual recipients and avoided an examination of the industries which benefit from being able to retain skilled and experienced workers between contracts and projects. Adopting a project-style of employment based on neoliberal tenets of flexibility and just-on-time delivery as opposed to retaining solely a full-time operational workforce has allowed for dramatic growth and agility for Oil Sands companies and connected sub-contractors. Yet it is the presence of the EI system which has made it possible to maintain a reserve supply of labour in times when such labour power is not required by making such periods of unemployment less deleterious and more palatable for workers engaged in such industries. The EI system effectively externalises the reproductive costs of labour in between such contracts and temporary projects to the federal government which maintains such a program and the workers which fund it through their contributions. As a de facto subsidy to seasonal industries and to industries making use of temporary or contingent labour, it maintains a reserve pool of skilled labour that may, if not for the opportunity to make use of EI to mitigate the impacts of unemployment between contracts, become involved in industries offering more stable and permanent work opportunities elsewhere.

Elizabeth May, the leader of the federal Green political party, echoed this concerns in regards to not only the Oil Sands industry but many resource extraction and natural resource industries operation in Canada:

> Most of the forest industries in this country would not be able to have a trained work force that could pick up when they're ready to come to work, if their employees didn't find work that was so compelling that they weren't available. [...] It's a structural reality of the seasonal industries in this country. If you don't like it, you can have a conversation about the fact that forestry, fisheries, tourism, mining in some parts of the country are seasonal and that very large corporations benefit from this system. (Ligaya 2012:1)

Freddy explains that at first in the 1970s when some workers began venturing out to the Oil Sands and then again in the mid to late 1990s, working in the Oil Sands was simply not as attractive for many workers due to the lack of institutionalized measures to promote mobile labour while the length of time expected of workers to work away was also a detriment. The adoption of fly in/fly out strategies (Storey 2010), dividing work into shorter projects, allowing for workers to intersperse their time in the Oil Sands with time back home and the opportunity to collect EI during this period made the possibility of working out West more palatable to many. Freddy reflects on the challenges of working in the Oil Sands in the mid-1990s before the 21-and-7 system became popularized:

> Before, there was none of that [*flights paid for by the employer*]. If you were Nova Scotian going up to Fort Mac, you were doing it on your own dime. And there was no layoffs. So you would have to find an older guy that went prior to that, that's a tougher individual. But a lot of the guys now, they have it easy. Like, the project I was on before, it was a five year project. So there was no, well, if you quit, you were fucked. So say you were there for ninety days, you worked your ass off and you had enough. And you come back here and say "I

> quit, I've had enough", you'd fight hard. The project's not done, you'd have to fight hard, prove hardship to get UI [*unemployment insurance*].

A final main component to be considered here in understanding Industrial Cape Breton as a sending region and a site of reserve labour is the social connections and the connections to "home" which encourage individuals to retain a level of commitment to the region and to be willing to stay in the area despite its absence of economic opportunities.[70] A repeated refrain from many informants involved in mobile work trajectories was the ironic statement that they would go away to work so that they wouldn't have to leave Industrial Cape Breton, that temporary sojourns out West allowed them to retain a connection to home and allow their families to retain such a connection. "Home", then, operates as a polythetic category (Rapport and Dawson 1998) and can refer broadly to locality (Douglas 1991), sentiments of belonging (Markowitz 2004), nostalgia (Nı′ Laoire 2007), relations and connections to place (Escobar 2001), configurations of social interactions (Amit 2002) and/or to social relations occurring within certain locales or social spheres (Lee and Hummon 1993). Olwig mentions that home need not be tied intrinsically to a singular place but rather to particular sets of social relations such as the family (1999). Home, in this particular equation, can be identified through certain relations left behind such as children, parents, husband, or wife, who in terms of their placements *vis-à-vis* home and away, can come to serve as social anchors (Olwig 1999). For some, a pragmatic decision is added to the social connections

[70] Home was oft-cited as a principle reason for migrating and is a very complex concept to be undertaken in this rather short section. It is explored in more detail as a major thematic in the Introduction as well as the following chapter.

so that a cost-benefit analysis reveals that it is not worthwhile. Margaret explained the thought process involved in her and Stan's dismissal of the idea of leaving the region:

> The kids are rooted here. So you'd be uplifting them from their friends and school and community. Number two, you try to sell your house and who's going to buy your house at a decent price? Number three, you move out West and homes out there are in the – friends of ours just bought a very very modest, small bungalow. Two bedroom, for four hundred and twenty five thousand dollars. Now if you're going to go out there and get a home that would accommodate a Cape Breton family, you know, you're in well over half a million dollars for a home. Where do you get that? There's mortgage payments but the good money you're making out there is being spent on mortgage, everything is expensive out there... You'd leave so much debt behind to your families.

Margaret and Stan had spent a large portion of their lives living in the "away" before deciding to return home to raise a family. Margaret's quotation also reveals that such connections to home and community are not necessarily parochial formed through a binary of a lived rural Gemeinschaft compared to a imagined urban Gessellenschaft (Tonnies 2002) but rather obtained through either first-hand experiences or through information obtained through networks about the social and financial difficulties of moving and living away. For many, labour mobility and mobile labour trajectories had been first-hand experiences in which the concept of "home" in Cape Breton came to be fortified in the away.

Megan, who spent nearly twenty years living in Toronto and then in Fort McMurray before returning to Cape Breton in her mid-40s, had difficulties articulating the particular rationale that she held for holding a connection to the region. After thinking for a moment, she mused that it may be a result of the historical connections to the area that explains why she and many members of her family have either returned or wish to do

so; a possible explanation that she extends to explain why so many are willing to travel back-and-forth from Industrial Cape Breton to the Oil Sands:

> Maybe it's like, our descendents came from Scotland and tended the land. Like, even Garnet, Jane and Paul [*Megan's two cousins and brother who have relocated to Toronto and Edmonton*] they all, like, long for home. Which could be the reason too why the families stay in Cape Breton and the husband goes out to work. 'Cause the roots are so strong.

Megan's explanation could be dismissed as a reflection of an essentiallizing discourse which ignores the socially constructed nature of our experiences of and connections to space and place (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 40). But yet, despite a deterritorializing world marked by global flows and embracing of placelessness (Appadurai 1996) where the most intimate sense of belonging one can possess is, ostensibly, one of "being at home in the world" (Chambers 1994) many still claim connections to particular locales, even if such connections are not easily articulated. "Rootless mobility" is no less socially constructed or "natural" than impressions of "rooted belonging" (Ahmed *et al*, 2003: 2-3).

Other informants have noted that such connections to home are detrimental and that certain individuals need to let go of their relations of comfort and accept the necessity for mobility. Freddy had spent over ten years as a mobile worker and blamed his recent divorce on the difficulties of living a life of perpetual absence and return. On one hand, having understood and attempted to preserve such connections to home for himself and his family, he eventually came to surmise that the sacrifices involved in maintaining these connections to home to preserve the local social connections to the family simply, in the end, is not worth it. From his perspective he was of the opinion that

many men taking part in the commute were doing so to allow their partners to continue to maintain the social connections of home and that maintaining the family unit ought to take precedence over notions of home:

> I think the women, if you're working at Sobey's [*an Atlantic Canadian grocery store*] and staying here, I think it would be much easier on the men, a lot better on the family if they got their ass up there. And if they're like, well, I got my mom and I got Sobey's. It'd be like, well, stand by your man and get your ass up there. But get a plan, right. Like, in five years, go back or three years go back. [...] You just have to make that break, that's all.

Neoliberalism demands labour mobility (Sennett 1998, 2006) and it appears that connections to home are a riposte to such logics. But yet, "home" is a complex concept; while often an individually defined notion, conceptions and ideas of home are concomitantly formed through historical processes and through relations of power (Ahmed *et al* 2003). In terms of connections to home in the case of Industrial Cape Breton such connections in one respect represent a disavowal of hegemonic neoliberal discourses and logics, a rejection of ideals in which individuals must be flexible, mobile and willing to abandon deep-seated fields of social interaction, memory and social connection in order to comply with neoliberal logics of push-and-pull dynamics of the labour market. But yet as the idea of home comes entwined with hegemonic processes such connections and interactions come to reinforce neoliberal logic as individuals accept the necessity to undertake contingent and mobile work arrangements in order to continue the idea of home. In this case, the idea of home emerges as a critical factor in maintaining a reserve pool of labour distant from sites of production.

Concluding Remarks: Hegemonies of Migration

Conditions of unemployment and connected conditions of labour mobilities are no longer seen as a deleterious side-effect of capitalism but rather as accepted, taken-for-granted and for some, anticipated experiences of the world of work. In transitioning from Fordism to neoliberalism, the conditioning of workers to consent to such circumstances, to accept such logics and to play an active role in carrying out the self-disciplining required to adapt to and function in the contemporary labour market, in turn entailing a drastic shift in worker subjectivities. For many, this has entailed a transition from a Fordist classed subjectivity in which one agrees to sell one's labour in return for a certain degree of stability, security and benefits extending to the future while recognizing one's collective relationship to the labour process, to a neoliberal classed subjectivity in which an individuated relation to work and the concomitant requirements of flexibility and acceptance of risk are fostered within the individual. Such transitions do not occur with resistance, recalcitrance or renegotiation but often attempts to resist come to reinforce such logics rather than dismantling or successfully critiquing them.

In the case of Industrial Cape Breton, the closing of the mills and mines coincided with the beginnings of the dramatic expansion and "boom" period of the oil sands industries with many former industrial workers coming to secure mobile work arrangements in the sands. For many, experiences of economic decline and unemployment had primed them to accept the conditions of these work arrangements and neoliberal logics of flexibility. For others, the loss of local Fordist work relations was met

with intense discontent and resistance. Yet, various processes converged to allow for an acquiescence to certain labour market logics as mobile labour mobility and periods of unemployment came to be increasingly perceived as part of natural cycles and beyond critique, not necessarily happily but begrudgingly accepted. Experiences of regional economic decline and deindustrialization allow elements of neoliberalism to appear as a penetrating logic of a reality. Other factors such as state practices of worker retraining, the existence of Employment Insurance, formal and informal networks connecting individuals to mobile work-lives and even connections to notions of home, converge to allow for a region to emerge as an accessible pool of reserve labour for distant labour processes populated by individuals of the requisite qualities who have taken on a role in disciplining themselves to particular logics of the labour market.

Chapter Seven

Come back! Come back! To what? To seasonal work and living off EI?: On The Issues of Out-Migration and Return

> The subject is out-migration or as we called it back in the 1940s when I was involved in the project: Goin' down the road. I wandered in the jungle called Canada for 55 years and returned to Cape Breton a couple of years ago on retirement. My advice to young Cape Bretoners is don't leave the island. It is a jungle out there. If you find it impossible to survive here and have to leave, then don't return. My mistake was coming back. I find it very difficult to adjust to the strange climate, the strange behaviour of the population and the strange behaviour of the business community. If you leave, don't trust anybody and always expect the unexpected.
>
> - Excerpt from a submission entitled "Don't go away but don't come back" in the letters section of the Cape Breton Post newspaper, March 22 2004

There is a somewhat tired joke that one occasionally hears in the pubs around Cape Breton and Fort McMurray. There are different iterations, of course but it generally resembles the following: "Why does St. Peter have so much trouble with Cape Bretoners in Heaven? Because they're always trying to get out and go back home." When told, it usually only provokes a groan rather than laughter but it does underline the penchant of Cape Bretoners, both those "at home" and "away", to see themselves in diasporic terms and to hold a particularly strong "ideology of return" to borrow Brettell's phrase used to similarly describe migrant and expatriate Portuguese (2003). The joke also points to the aspirational aspect of home, that it can seem "better than heaven", at least when one is away from it. Home for many mobile and migrant workers is an idea to move towards. And yet, writers on migration have noted very distinct migrant experiences in relation to

home that for some it remains in the abstraction as a distant future goal, either a nostalgic idyll to return to at some later point in one's life or a desirable position ahead to eventually be realized (Ahmed *et* al 2003; Striffler 2007) . Yet, it is one thing to subscribe to a "myth of return" (Gmelch 1980) and to postpone decisions of settlement or movement into the future and a completely different thing to actually intend and embark on the literal path of return.

The return as both an aspiration and an intention has often been presented as an intimately individual or household action or set of ideas and decision-making processes. Yet as Ong reminds us, "people's everyday actions" ought to be perceived "as a form of cultural politics embedded in specific power contexts" (1999:5). The question of return becomes more than about individual aspirations and intentions and positioned in relations of power and knowledge. States, governments and communities take interest and attempt to control—at times in subtle ways, at times more forcefully—who goes, who returns, what roles and responsibilities individuals hold in the here and away and which types of returns are advantageous and which absences are desirable.

Nations have been noted as perpetuating forms of long-distance nationalism (Glick Schiller 1999) in which migrants and expatriates are seen as having a moral and financial responsibility to the homeland in the forms of remittances and support for community associations (Basch *et al.* 1994; Striffler 2007; Olwig 2007) with such obligations extending through generations (Brettell 2003). In these contexts, migrants are useful in that they do not return and instead contribute to the economy from afar. As Brettell examines, Portugal has been particularly strident in reaching out to members of

its emigrant population with nationality laws changed in the 1980s so that Portuguese descent, rather than place of birth, could became a basis of Portuguese nationality. The Portuguese state has neither the desire nor capacity to welcome these foreign populations into its territory permanently while the remittances such long-distance nationalists contribute have become a crucial addition to the economy (2000, 2003).

In other lines of thought, migrants are given the task to return and provoke development in their home communities. In modernization theories which continue to be popular in discourses of public policy and development (Bauder 2006), return migrants have been tasked with the heavy responsibility of improving the local economy. By returning, they bring with them financial and human capital acquired abroad and thus are anticipated to infuse their home regions with knowledge of new productive technologies and techniques, entrepreneurship and innovation (Kearney 1986; Binford 2003; King 1986; King *et al* 1983) and become "agents of change" in their home communities (Brettell 2000). In such instances, managed migration programs such as Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Program became framed as development projects by their advocates, in that they allow participants to return to the Caribbean and Mexico with remittances and skills from abroad (Ferguson 2007) even if such economic development in the sending regions rarely transpire (Basok 2003; Binford 2003).

As such, this chapter deals with the issues of out-migration and its corollary, return migration, from two converging perspectives: from the political point of view of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) where issues of out-migration have become merged with conversations of economic decline. Appardurai details that

statistics are used not to passively enumerate a population but to rather actively create a population which can then be subjected to various means of control (1993) while Asad continues that statistics allow for the creation of "social knowledge that is continuously and profoundly interventionist" (1994: 74) to be used as a tool not for understanding but for controlling, regulating and changing society. In the case of the CBRM, statistics and demographics have created a dynamic view of the population and from this has emerged a particular problem based around a particular equation of social change for which there seems no solution. Out-migration is caused by economic decline yet one dialectically perpetuates the other in which further out-migration intensifies the region's economic decline. This equation has motivated the municipality to be enormously vocal on issues of out-migration, moving it to the centre of public and media discourses and yet municipal agents have been mute in regards to issues of return.

The second perspective presented in this chapter examines the events of what happens when a household responds to the region's call for young families to return and to their own aspirations to go back "home". And yet, the return is not the easy reinsertion they expected. The family is greeted by the familiarity of a "bad economy" which motivated their initial departure while the physical locale and local community to which they had ascribed with sentiments of "home" have become unfamiliar and hostile. In returning, they lose the connection to place which they had fostered in the away while the CBRM reveals that it has no plans for when its equation is applied in reverse and people return.

This chapter spans out of a repeated set of experiences I encountered in my fieldwork. During conversations with people in Cape Breton, I would inevitably come to talk about my project and how I was in the region speaking with individuals taking part in the commute to Fort McMurray and their family members. Typically, people would agree that this was an issue impacting Cape Breton and mention that they had several relatives taking part in the commute. But they would invariably frame this pattern of migration as a symptom (and a relatively minor one at that) of a greater instance of Cape Breton having a "bad economy". The more I would pry, the more conversations would reveal something of a linear relation: the starting position was that Cape Breton as a region, has a "bad economy". What was meant by "bad economy" varied but was always directly tied to employment or "lack of jobs" in the region. Depending on the conversation, "lack of jobs" was presented as either the root cause as the principal indicator or as directly synonymous with a "bad economy". A "bad economy" prompts two types of movement: permanent out-migration and circular migration. The most serious consequence is out-migration as this entails individuals and households removing themselves from the community fabric. Of secondary consequence were the types of circular migration that I was interested in, which was generally seen as less of a threat to the local community as such workers still were present in the community fabric and, among some people were valorized for staying despite being unable to find local work. In my involvement with town halls, focus groups and speaking with employees in local development agencies, I came to see how local political and regional economic development discourse reframes this linear relation as a circular equation. A wide swath of reports produced by

interconnected governmental, government-affiliated and private firms on local regional development have concentrated on local population statistics and demographic projections, confirming both that the population is declining and the average age of the population is increasing (CBCEDA 2007; CBRM 2009; ECBC 2009; Stantec 2010; Terrain Group 2004). This is said to both be a result of economic decline as individuals leave for greater employment opportunities elsewhere while such demographic shifts hasten economic decline as a smaller pool of labour and a reduced consumer base makes the area less attractive to potential business investments and leads to a smaller tax base for the municipality to utilize for service provision. In migration studies and state policy, both the opposing strategies of long-distance nationalism and modernization theories issue a role for migrants to play (Bauder 2006; Brettell and Hollifield 2003). Yet, in this case, the circular equation becomes a spiral and while local government and development firms focus on issues of population retention, immigration and return, they lack elaboration on how incoming population would alter this equation.

An opportunity to see how such dynamics would play out on the household level presented itself at an early point in my field work. I was invited by the local radio station to talk during the morning program about my research on long-distance commuters. A few hours after the show had aired, a listener contacted me with an interest in sharing her family's experiences of migration, telling me that she and her husband had a unique perspective on the commute with she and her family having just returned to Cape Breton and her husband, unable to find local work, had begun doing the back- and-forth out West.

My first meeting with Penny was over a coffee in her home. She explained that she and her husband were originally from the area and that they had just moved back with their two daughters from Edmonton after having been away for over a decade. Her husband, Jonathan, had left once again a few weeks prior and she had taken interest in my research as an opportunity to share her story. As the conversation continued, interspersed with some lighter talk about dolphins with Penny's seven year-old daughter, she explained how the return had not been easy. She and Jonathan had heard in Edmonton that the economy was improving in Cape Breton and that jobs in the trades were opening up and so he as an experienced electrician would be able to easily locate work. And so, they decided to move their young family, consisting of themselves and two daughters, to settle down permanently in Industrial Cape Breton. Yet the return had not been the easy reintegration into the local community that the couple had imagined. Jonathan was not able to find a local job and began commuting to projects out West. Penny was originally committed to staying in the area and had returned to university to train as a nurse but the experiences over the past year had soured her to the idea of permanently settling in the area. She expressed her exasperation that both provincial and local governments boldly claimed to want people to return yet seemed mute to the issues and challenges of people who did return while her public critiques were met with denigration within the community. Additionally, the return was meant to be a return "home" to familiar places and familiar faces. Yet, even this did not pan out. The geography of her hometown was intimately familiar yet had become populated by people unknown to Penny. The friends that stayed had followed their own lives and become strangers and were not keen on

including a now-outsider like her in their social circles. A lack of economic opportunities, exclusion from local social networks and with the sentimental ideas of "home" she held in her imagination having been dashed, Penny had no illusions about settling down in a community where she felt she belonged no more. Over the coming months, I spoke with Penny and Jonathan on several occasions. Our conversations sometimes returning to this profound bitterness felt by Penny while meeting with Jonathan on the rare occasions when he would be home for a week or two between work contracts. Together, we assembled their stories of departure, return and acceptance of a mobile life for their family.

As such, this chapter deals with the issue of return from two points of departure: from the viewpoint of a returning family who want to resettle in their home-village after a period away and from the perspective of the municipal government which has made it painfully obvious that the municipality wants such families to move back. And yet, once the return has been accomplished, it is revealed that "home" is not necessarily the place imagined in the away for the young family while the municipality reveals that it has no real strategy for accommodating new returnees beyond advertising the crisis which will occur should they fail to return.

The Anthropology of Return Migration

In decades of work in migration studies, there is an odd consistency in writers noting that the act of return is the least examined and least analysed phenomenon in studies of migration. Gmelch, in an early and oft-cited *Annual Review* article straight-

forwardly entitled "Return Migration" (1980), offers some plausible explanations: contemporary migration studies were born out of nineteenth century reports of the transatlantic migrations where the voyage to the "New World" was seen as a one-way trip. Scholars continued in this line of thought, continuing to see migration as a unidirectional, linear process, assumptions which led these same scholars to ignore the substantial numbers of immigrants who, after spending some time in Canada or the United States, did in fact return to Europe. Subsequent studies became interested in rural-urban movements in which a return from the city to the countryside was not expected. King (1986) also adds that the state has typically been more interested in who is arriving rather than who is leaving with census data being markedly more detailed about processes of immigration rather than emigration, leaving researchers with little data with which to explore such processes in reverse.

Yet, others have described migration as a circular process but in such a way that the return was not remarkable, merely a coming back to the spot from which one began. A typical perspective of earlier migration studies was to present labour migration in a strictly rotational sense as a cycle between home and away with an understanding that to leave was to imply an obvious return (Ahmed *et al* 2003). The period away was primarily seen as a work experience undertaken to bring money into the sending community having little effect on the migrant's perceptions and worldview (Striffler 2007) with the eventual return home signifying the completion of the cycle (Gmelch and Richling 1988: 12). It has been noted that the rather long-standing disinterest in the subject of return perhaps represents a relic of previous essentialist thinking which saw peoples' natural states as

sedentary and unmoving (Gupta and Ferguson 1997) with the eventual return perceived merely as "an act of unproblematic and natural reinsertion in the local or national community once left behind" (Stefansson 2004:5).

Return has not been entirely ignored, with both King (1986) and Gmelch (1980) forming typologies classifying forms of return migrants while others speak of "sojourners" (Chavez 1988), back and forth movement between locations (Grasmuch and Pessar 1991) while the life-story has proved as particularly useful in detailing the lived experiences of return (Bozzoli 1991). Yet as Brettell (2007, 2003) argues, before an interest in globalization changed perspectives in the field in the 1990s, studies of migration were by and large dominated by modernization and world systems theories with such movements based on push-and-pull factors moving labour from periphery to core in macro-level explanations that continued to perceive migration as either strictly one-way or rotational processes.

Interest in the act of return transformed as transnationalism and concomitant writings on deterritorialization and globalization rose in prominence while more recent scholarship has understood transnational migration as taking place within fluid social spaces that are constantly reworked through migrants' simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Smith 2005; Pries 2005). Transnationalism as put forth by Basch, Blanc and Glick Schiller (1991) identified that migrants operate in social fields that move beyond national and geographical boundaries, moving us beyond the idea of immigrants "uprooting" from one context and "settling" in another. Glick Schiller further developed ideas of transnationalism (particularly as the

concept become appropriated by other disciplines to speak more broadly of processes of globalization), speaking of trans-migrants and transnationalism as a way to move beyond former categories of circulatory, permanent and return migration, and in the process making irrelevant the hard binaries between "here" and "away", between temporary migrant and permanent immigrant (Glick Schiller 1991; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; *cf.* Brettell 2003).

After a focus on the macro-impacts of migration in previous trends, transnationalism also repositioned the individual within migration studies, becoming interested in how particular migrants reformulate time and space while on the move (Rouse 1995), lives lived in border cultures (Kearney 1991) and more generally interventions in issues of deterritorialization and citizenship (Appadurai 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1997) and how transmigrants live their lives across borders (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001). New social fields and areas of inquiry emerged within these forms of movements and flows such as ethno-scapes (Appadurai 1996) and transnational circuits (Rouse 1991).

Transnationalism with its focus on supra-national social fields, collapsed binary thinking about home and away as distinct and unconnected locations. Yet, although it underlined the multiple connections that trans-migrants held and the importance of aspirations of return in terms of preserving transnational connections, it came to undermine or show disinterest in actual acts of return. With a focus on lives lived in motion, physical acts of departure and return came to be overshadowed by focusing on

transnational connections and the intentions and aspirations of "home-coming" (Stephansson 2004).

While transnationalism was a pivotal intervention in terms of re-centering subjects and questioning the value of certain binaries, it is becoming apparent that transnationalism has allowed analysis to go too far into the abstract to the point of becoming methodologically weak and turning away from actual lived experiences and social relations. Transnationalism has meant a turn to the ideational while the importance of actual acts of social interaction have drifted to the wayside as the focus in anthropology shifts to diasporas, deterritorialization and "imagined communities" (Amit 2002: 9). Olwig critiques transnationalism on two main fronts: first as overly occupied with how people maintain or create identities which span borders. The nation comes to be seen as a principal source of identity, even as such studies attempt to critique the nation. Secondly, few movements are actually transnational in character. The crossing of a national boundary is rarely seen as the defining aspect of one's movements while most migrations take part within social networks of family and friends, some of which may or may not be located in other national contexts:

> It is therefore insufficient to describe such migration as the movement from one country or nation-state to another. This may be a correct description from an official, legal and political point of view but it says little about the pathways of interpersonal relations by which the move actually takes place (Olwig 2007:10).

As such, a renewed focus on the return has been emerging with studies particularly acute about the differences between the home imagined in the away and the home encountered in the return. Stefansson (2004) refers to the idea of "homecoming" in

which the aspirational idea of "home" meets with the actual act of return, when "home" is no longer an element of the future or the product of wishful thinking but becomes a lived reality. This collision of aspiration and reality is described as being experienced as more difficult and destabilizing than the initial departure. If home as a notion is formed in the away, then when these "imagined geographies of home" (Ní Laoire 2007:339) collide with the actual lived experiences of home once one returns, a discordance can lead one to question the sentiments of belonging developed in the away (Ahmed *et al.* 2003; Markowitz 2004). Ní Laoire explains how the "dream return" is instead met with "shock" (2007:339) in the case of one informant who returned to a rural area after an urban migration:

> In some ways, it's funny but you nearly felt over there (London) like you nearly belonged to something more strongly than you did here because even though, you *were* Irish – when you were over, the Irish community, because you were different you all belonged together if you know what I mean, whereas here everyone's all the same anyway so it's not that strong kind of feeling of belonging. So I think we definitely missed that when we came back here you know (2007:340).

Such experiences play a role in deconstructing the notion of an easy return leading or a straightforward reinsertion into the body social of one's home community. Such returns or longings to return to particular sites ought not to be described as natural or commonsensical but rather as exceptional, distinctive and sometimes disruptive processes (Ahmed *et al* 2003; Markowitz 2004; Steffanson 2004). Home is inherently changed through movement while leaving a site is a new way of experiencing it (Olwig 1997) and as such, the following section will look at the decision-making processes of Penny and Jonathan in their decisions to originally leave the Northside, presumably for good and their decision over a decade later to return.

Departures and Arrivals: Penny and Jonathan's return to a simpler life

When I first met Jonathan, he had just returned from Fort McMurray for a week-long vacation during a work contract. I pulled up to the driveway of his rented Northside house where he was sitting on the concrete front step, watching his nine year-old daughter playing with a group of girls around her age. We moved inside and Penny, Jonathan and I talked about working out West, moving back home and plans for the future. The group of girls ran giggling and screaming in, out and throughout the house while we drank coffee and ate the Tim Bits I had brought. At one point, we paused from our conversation and watched through the picture window as the girls hopped on the bicycles they had left strewn across the yard and biked down the quiet street, around the corner and out of sight. Jonathan turned to me and said, "And you want to know why we wanted to move back? This is why" as he nodded his head outside in the direction the girls took. "She's playing with her friends, having fun and being a kid. And I don't have to worry, 'cause I know she's safe around here. She couldn't do this back there. You think I'd be able to take my eyes off of her for a minute in downtown Edmonton?"

Penny and Jonathan began their relationship in high school and moved to Halifax soon after graduating to pursue post-secondary education. When the two left Cape Breton they thought the only returns they would make would be for the occasional summer vacation. Corbett uses the phrase "migration imperative" (2007) to explain the sentiments of youth in rural areas to leave such that leaving is seen as a common and accepted part of entry into adulthood. "Getting out" becomes an ethical and even moral responsibility. For Penny and Jonathan, the idea of staying in Cape Breton never even appeared as a

plausible option, particularly since they both had come of age in the difficult and turbulent economic times of the mid-1990s with the mines and mills shutting down and unemployment seemingly the norm rather than the exception.

Jonathan left university after his first year of an undergraduate program and found employment in the service sector as a retail clerk in a clothing store. Penny completed a degree in biology yet was unable to find work beyond entry-level service sector positions. Penny, like Jonathan, also took on a position as a retail clerk while continuing to search for more advantageous employment in Halifax.

Penny had a number of relatives working out West. In fact, her parent's generation had been among the "first wave" of Cape Bretoners to go out West in the 1970s and she had in fact been born in Alberta before her parents returned home to Sydney Mines while she was an infant. Two of her uncles had been routinely relating to her and Jonathan about the "booming economy" and the myriad work opportunities available in Edmonton and Alberta more generally. The couple eventually came to the conclusion that Halifax was lacking in opportunity and they made the move out West.

For the first few months in Edmonton, the couple stayed with one of Penny's uncles and found jobs once more in the service sector as retail clerks while they became accustomed to life in the new city. Jonathan had always wanted to "work with his hands" while his earlier attempt at university had confirmed that he wanted to pursue a career in the trades and focused on finding employment in Edmonton's active construction industry. He eventually was hired as a general labourer for a sub-contracting firm and began working within the numerous oil and gas facilities on the edge of the city.

Jonathan relates that he didn't particularly enjoy occupying the low-level position of a non-unionized sub-contracted general labourer or, as he was referred to on the job site, as one of the "Goon Spoons", a reference to the fact that his main task was using a shovel to clear debris from the areas in which skilled tradespeople would work. Meanwhile, the jobsite work crews consisted of a mixture of unionized and non-unionized workers employed through a maze of sub-contractors with unionized workers making no attempts to hide their disdain for the presence of non-unionized workers. Jonathan relates how upon arriving at the various sites, his work-crew's van would be occasionally encircled by union workers, who would rock the van and shout out various intimidation phrases while in other instances, his crew's portable toilet often had a habit of mysteriously falling onto its side.

However, Jonathan was an entrepreneurial young man and saw his job as a "Goon Spoon" as an entry point into a wider career in the construction industry. Jonathan's work put him in close contact with various unionized workers, to whom he made his desires and ambitions to join a union very clear from the beginning. He eventually befriended an electrician that offered to sponsor his union application and mentor him through the steps of becoming an apprentice, although he admits that while his aspiration to become a tradesman was clear in his head, the particular trade was of little import: "And to be honest, I didn't even know what trade I really wanted to do...I was really thinking hard about doing masonry but it just turned out that the buddy I talked to the most was doing electrical."

Jonathan, at a later point, explained how different the attitudes towards work and the labour market were out West compared to Industrial Cape Breton and even Halifax. He found that people took a desperate approach to work in Cape Breton, where one considered oneself lucky to have a job regardless of what that job entailed, whereas in Alberta the booming oil and gas industries and interconnected boom in construction, represented an array of opportunities which took him a while to realize and adjust to: "Back home, you hope to find a job, any job. Out there, you get to choose the job you want....And that's the thing about Alberta. If you can show that you're enthusiastic and half-way intelligent, they'll give you a chance."

Having been accepted into the union and undergone the first stage of training, Jonathan was strongly recommended by his new union brothers to take contracts in Fort McMurray where an apprentice like him could quickly accumulate the hours needed to progress in his training. Soon after the birth of Penny's and his first daughter, Jonathan began working in the oil sands industry north of Fort McMurray, doing a 21-and-7 arrangement in which he lived in a work-camp for most of the month and spent a week home in Edmonton with his family.

Penny, during this time, had found clerical work in a downtown Edmonton office. Once she became pregnant, Penny and Jonathan convinced Jonathan's mother, a personal care worker that had experienced frequent bouts of un- and under employment in Cape Breton, to move to Edmonton. She first lived with the couple, helping Penny care for the new baby for several months before finding employment in a senior citizen's care centre and moving close by in the neighbourhood.

Over the course of the next several years, Jonathan worked on and traveled to a variety of projects, many in the Fort McMurray region but also in other various oil-related construction projects throughout Alberta and Northwestern Canada. As a couple, Penny and Jonathan intended that Jonathan would continue this pattern of work for only several years, long enough for him to accumulate the hours and experience necessary to become a journeyman electrician and gain enough seniority in the union to be able to consistently obtain local contracts.

Then, slowly yet gradually, Jonathan began noticing the number of projects being scaled back while his periods of unemployment between projects were beginning to become longer and longer. There was talk among his co-workers that the boom was ending and with a slow-down was on the horizon that this lack of work would continue to worsen.

Meanwhile, the couple had had a second daughter and Penny had returned once more to working a clerical job which she no longer found as enriching and rewarding as she once had. Penny had always intended to go back to school and find a rewarding career but as she explains, that particular ambition was delayed as the day-to-day tasks of managing a family and a household absorbed her time. At the same time, the couple had begun to hear from family and friends that Cape Breton was undergoing an economic recovery and in fact there was word of an impending labour shortage on the island. A generation of industrial workers were on the verge of retiring and jobs for skilled workers would soon be opening at the electrical plant and other industries "back home". The couple began to think of a simpler life in Cape Breton, away from the complexities of the

city with its traffic and crime and back with friends and family, where the possibilities of more affordable living and owning their own house would be in sight. They decided on a plan to return with Penny planning to study nursing at Cape Breton University while Jonathan found a local job as an electrician. Penny began to budget the household's income more fastidiously, saving money to pay for her education. Work contracts for Jonathan continued to become shorter with longer periods of unemployment between such contracts. Meanwhile, Penny applied and was accepted to a nursing program at the Cape Breton University and Penny's mother, excited at the prospect of the family moving back home and no longer having her grandchildren call her "Nanny-Far-Away", secured a house rental for the family next to her own house, where Penny had grown up. Finally, in the summer of 2008 with a great deal of excitement and anxiety, they sold most of their furniture and packed their belongings into a moving trailer and began the long drive "back home." Jonathan looked forward to taking on an industrial job in Cape Breton yet retained his Alberta union membership, just in case.

Governmental Actions for return and the problematizing of population

Decisions and processes of migration do not occur uniquely or completely on the individual or household level. The Nova Scotia provincial government and the Cape Breton Regional Municipality are particularly interested in the act of return by mobile individuals such as Jonathan and Penny and are hoping that more people like their young family can be influenced to make the return "home".

As Asad (1994) and Appardurai (1993) outline the concept of "population" in line with discussions govermentality is not a value-free term but interwoven with relations of power, a concept made possible through information gathering techniques to create knowledges for the delineation and control of social bodies (Foucault 1991). Population can serve as something of a canary in a coal mine with the loss of population coming to indicate issues within a region such as unemployment, lack of opportunity, high living costs and so on. Out-migration can be problematized in a variety of ways, seen as human capital leaving a region in the form of "brain drain" as a decrease in the tax base and a loss of consumers to stimulate local business (ECBC 2009) while similarly, circular migration can be seen as ridding a region of un- or under-employment "unproductive" members of the population (Binford 2003) and transforming them into remittance-sending "productive" members as a problem becomes turned into a solution (Ferguson 2007).

Within Canada, rural areas are generally experiencing persistent declines of populations as more and more leave towns and countryside for urban areas (Halseth and Halseth 2004) which is perceived from the view of governance structures in both positive and negative terms. Urbanization allows for more effective (and cheaper) provision of public services yet risks urban over-population while rural flight causes the abandonment of town and village infrastructures (Jean 2003). So, conversely, the Canadian state pursues both policies which lead to population centralization in urban areas while government-affiliated and funded projects strive to attract internal and international migrants to rural areas and regions experiencing population declines (O'Connell 2010).

In terms of Nova Scotia, the province is made up of a largely rural population with the capital of Halifax the only metropolitan area. The population of Nova Scotia has remained stable during the past 20 years, experiencing a slight upwards growth while Halifax has been consistently growing at a faster rate than the rest of the province: The population of the province was 899 942 in 1990 and 913 462 by 2006 while Halifax grew from 330 846 to 372 858 in the same period (Statistics Canada 2012). The province experiences a net loss of about 10 000 people per year due to inter-provincial migration while gaining approximately that number through international immigration (ECBC 2009). As such, the Nova Scotia demographic trend is one of centralization of the population within a single urban centre while the surrounding vast rural areas undergo population decline.

The relatively stagnant growth of the population and the depopulation of the rural areas has been problematized by the Nova Scotia provincial government. Population decline becomes associated with an aging population and subsequent lower birth rates, higher health care costs and reverberating effects for the future labour market (CBRM 2009). To combat these population numbers, the provincial government has began a variety of campaigns and initiatives to attract newcomers, convince former residents to return and to retain current residents. Various grants and loans have been made available to assist hopeful entrepreneurs while university graduates are able to have a percentage of their provincial student loan forgiven if they commit to living and working in Nova Scotia for a set number of years. Yet while these are initiatives which take place within

the province it is noteworthy when the province particularly attempts to extend its influence outwards.

One such outward-looking initiative is "Come to Life Nova Scotia" which since 2004, has operated as a wide-reaching place-branding and marketing campaign targeted towards former residents, businesses and potential incomers from across Canada and internationally. The campaign strives to frame Nova Scotia as both a good place to live and to do business, highlighting its low cost of living (by pointing out its low housing costs compared to the rest of Canada), its business-friendly environment (through various grants and subsidies programs and large number of universities signifying a supply of human capital) and its general quality of life (shown through proximity to the ocean and beaches, claims to a "simpler" life-style and through images of bucolic countryside and villages by the sea). The Come to Life campaign consists of a series of television commercials, print advertisements in national newspapers and magazines, billboard and public transit advertisements across Canada's urban centres and a large website hyper-linked to various other sources (for instance, potential tourists are directed to Tourism Nova Scotia's website while potential newcomers are directed to view real estate listings websites to see the low costs of housing for themselves).

The top two provincial destinations for people leaving Nova Scotia have been Ontario and, ever increasingly, Alberta, a fact bolstered by numerous studies and demographic reports (Action Canada 2007; ECBC 2009; Nova Scotia 2006), although among those who stay the "loss" of primarily young adults to Alberta is more commonly referred to colloquially as "the huge sucking sound of out West." In obvious recognition

of this trend, the Come to Life initiative in 2007 launched "Delusional Calgaria", a satirical marketing campaign squarely aimed at re-attracting young adults in the 20-44 age bracket who had left Nova Scotia for Alberta. The campaign was based around raising awareness of a fictional ailment of the same name in which moving to and staying in Alberta produces a range of symptoms curable only by returning to Nova Scotia.

The first stage of the campaign included a series of clinical-looking posters pasted around Calgary and Edmonton listing symptoms of the disease. For instance, one such poster features a diagram of two stick-figures, one extending its hand to the other while a long dash between the two figures symbolizes the detachment between the two. Under the figure, the following definition is offered:

> Symptom 3: Separation Anxiety. Living away from family and friends in Nova Scotia may lead to feelings of loneliness or longing for home. This is an early warning sign of Delusional Calgaria. If allowed to continue, a serious case of heartache may result. Early detection is crucial. Seek a better life closer to those you love. Moving back to Nova Scotia will remove all anxiety and restore your sense of optimism. To overcome separation anxiety visit www.delusionalcalgaria.ca.

The website linked to the Come to Life website and offered various resources to assist former residents in moving home (such as links to real estate and job-search websites). The centrepiece of the campaign was a "viral video" posted on Youtube and the campaign's website. The short video, shot in a faux documentary style, introduces us to Jim, a Nova Scotian who has recently made the move to Calgary and who has became afflicted with the aforementioned aliment. An ominous soundtrack plays over a scrolling text informing the viewer of the gravity of the situation:

> Everyone knows someone like Jim. Grew up in Nova Scotia. With a great family, great friends, a great life. Then one day he left. Went to Calgary for a big salary and the promise of a big life. Jim has Delusional Calgaria.

The video continues to follow Jim as we learn that he has been in Calgary for fourteen months and has deluded himself into being content with working overtime at a dead-end office job, the travails of heavy city traffic, long commutes and the potential of someday moving into an overpriced housing development. The clip is interspersed with testimonials from friends and family from "back home", expressing their concern and confusion towards his acceptance of this seemingly dysfunctional life style. As the short clip continues, his friends and family (with a therapist in tow) travel to Calgary to stage a surprise intervention for Jim. During said intervention, the participants take turns deriding the style of life to be found in the city —high costs of living, lack of social contact and a crowded urbanity—while underling Nova Scotia's current employment opportunities, low housing prices and relaxed "simpler" life-style (the proximity to the ocean and sandy beaches is mentioned several times). Jim's best friend concludes his argument with a forceful "Nova Scotia is where you *belong*". With the intervention a success, the video transitions to a picture of a triumphant and apparently "rehabilitated" Jim standing in front of a Nova Scotia harbour while the narrator authoritatively informs us that "Delusional Calgaria can be beaten. If you know someone suffering, don't let another day pass. Start the healing process today".

Those interested in "place" have strongly argued that there has been a pronounced detachment between theory and lived experience in studies of movement have been underlined: while transnationalism, deterritorialization and global "flows" have moved us beyond essientializations of place and ideas of "rooted belonging" (Ahmed *et al*, 2003:2-3; Gupta and Ferguson 1997), place and ideas of community found in place continues to

be particularly central in the everyday lives of individuals. Some would, in fact, argue that studies of globalization and movement have gone too far in defining place as of inferior importance to the abstract space of the global (Escobar 2001). The tropes used by the Calgaria video are particularly interesting because of the extent to which they play upon and reflect the rationales which migrants themselves hold in their aspirations to return, making heavy use of essentializations of place, the rural/urban divide and the myths of community found within this divide.[71]

As Gupta and Ferguson point out, "the irony of these times is that as actual places and localities become ever more blurred and indeterminate, *ideas* of culturally and ethnically distinct places become perhaps even more salient" (1997: 39); in the above example such ideas have exploded into an unambiguous rhetoric of individuals' implicit connection to particular localities, a naturalistic link that once broken is physically and psychically damaging to the uprooted individual. To go back as the Calgaria irreverently yet with a subtle forcefulness instructs, is quite literally a construction of a notion of an easy return leading to a "healing of the social body" (Stefansson 2004: 8).

More interestingly, though, is the anti-urban expressions and valorizations of a "rural" way of living found with the video in its implicit celebration of the communal life found in the rural as opposed to the atomizing and individualizing effects of the city. It is interesting in this case particularly because these elements parallel with Penny and

[71] The Calgaria campaign was not without its detractors with advocates of the mental health community critiquing the trivialization of mental health and addiction issues while Albertans took offence to the characterizations of Calgarian urban life. See "Calgaria sufferers no longer delusional" CBC News March 2007.

Jonathan's own reasons for return: the city is a "complex" busy place devoid of meaningful relations while "home" offers a "simpler" lifestyle with friends and family who know you as a complete person. Just as one belongs to place in the discourse of essentialization, the rural/urban divide offers rhetoric to exploit a longing to belong in the form of community. Community has long been associated with the rural as in Tonnies' normal types of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, of the close-knit village or family of "community" as opposed to the "society" of the atomized city (2002 [1957]) while Simmel made note of the individuality expressed in urban life as in stark contrast to the interdependence of rural life (1971).

Cohen points out that from such distinctions, certain myths of community have emerged. Following from Redford's distinction of 'folk' and 'urban' society, the rural comes to be seen as "personalistic, traditionalistic, stable, religious, familial", "the classical repository of community" while the urban underscores "the loss of community" (Cohen 1985: 27). While the urban causes social interactions to become fragmented and complex, where individuals relate to each other according to pre-ascribed roles and hierarchies, people in the rural interact in egalitarian multiplex relations as "whole persons" (1985: 29). Cohen notes that these multiplex relations actually have the potential to make social interactions in the rural more complex or at least different[72]. Gmelch (1980), at the time of his writing, notes that the majority of migration was from rural to urban both in terms of internal and international migration. Disagreeing with transnationalism before it was even established as a concept, Gmelch argued that the

[72] Likewise, Simmel revelled in the freedom found in the anonymity of the crowd (1971).

fundamental characteristic of migration was not the crossing of a national border or the meeting of two distinct cultures but rather the collision of rural ways of life with urban ways of life. He argued that return migration was about an individualistic evaluation of two forms of life: the urban lifestyle of the present and a nostalgic image of the rural lifestyle of one's past. Many returns were due to a nostalgic desire for the "simpler" ways of life found in the rural.

In deploying such heavy-handed tropes, the Calgaria campaign underlines the population anxieties of Nova Scotia provincial government actors in its targeting of out-migration as a problem worthy of intervention and reason for government to extend its reach beyond its territorial borders. But also as will be explored further on, to the extent that the tropes used parallel with Penny's and Jonathan's desires, showing that such tropes hold commonalities in the migrant experience of aspiring to return and the image of what they hope to return to.

If the provincial government's stance on out-migration can be termed as a nervous anxiety, the Cape Breton Region Municipality's perspective can be termed as approaching somewhere between sheer panic and morbid obsession. Cape Breton Island bears a particular relationship to out-migration with preceding generations seeing it as a normal and anticipated reality to spend a part of one's life out in the world before returning to Cape Breton as expressed by the ideas of "going down the road", "going out West" and "going away" (Hornsby 1989; Morgan 2009) becoming part and parcel of local vernacular. Cape Breton Island finds itself situated on the periphery of a national and global economy in which its principal function over the past decades is to have

labour drawn from it (Ferguson 2011). Yet over the past decade within the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, out-migration and the concomitant population decline has been increasingly problematized and targeted as an area of governmental intervention even if what such an intervention would resemble remains unclear and unexamined.

The Atlantic provinces in general have been identified as occupying a marginal status, for instance, a widespread study of work experiences within Atlantic (Krahn *et al* 2006:140) concludes that residents of the Atlantic Canadian region as a whole live in a "marginal work world" where little job security, few career opportunities, low pay and few benefits have become an expected and accepted way of life. Within Atlantic Canada, Cape Breton has been identified as holding a particularly long-lasting status as a region of economic decline (Barber 1992, Morgan 2010) existing on the periphery of a marginalized region where its residents' have developed a "tolerance for instability" (DeRoche 1987). It is generally accepted that marginal status or the more common public and policy phrase of existing in a state or process of economic decline, produces many effects within a region: unemployment, poverty, lower life expectancies and population decline through out-migration.

As such, it is striking to remark on the extent to which public discourse, media reports and discussions within structures of local governance and regional development reveal a preoccupation with population that has come to dominate the debate on issues of local economy and the future of communities in the CBRM to the exclusion of other factors and consequences.

While out-migration has been something of a historical element in Cape Breton, the closures of the coal mines and steel mill in the late 1990s and early 2000s and a following period of heightened out-migration initiated a particular interest in population decline and its connection to economic decline (Gibbs and Leech 2009). As such, over the past decade in particular, a number of reports commissioned by either the CBRM or by connected government-affiliated economic and regional economic development organizations in the area have either squarely focused on or made a primary concern of the issues of population decline and out-migration. A sampling of major reports produced over the past decade (CBCEDA 2007; CBRM 2009; ECBC 2009; Stantec 2010; Terrain Group 2004) reveal the same conclusions on the past and present demographic figures for the area and where applicable, the same projections for the future of the area. Such demographic studies agree that the population of the CBRM region has been directly tied with the coal and steel industries with the population growing in lock-step with the growth of these industries throughout the first half of the twentieth century and slowly decreasing in the second half of the century as these industries scaled back their operations, taking a dramatic dip in the 1996-2001 period of coal mine and steel mill closures. As such, the roots of demographic change are squarely connected with the CBRM's industrial past and post-industrial present. The reports agree that the CBRM's population continues to steadily decline with increasing out-migration, aging population and lower birth rates continuing to exacerbate the issues of population decline.

Cohen notes that out-migration is often feared to represent the "dissolution of community" (1985: 78) and residents express apparently legitimate fears that their

communities will continue to decline and age, becoming essentially communities of retirees with a definite expiry date. A brief scan of letters and articles published in the *Cape Breton Post* over the period of 2000 to 2010 reveals a prolonged and sincere concern with issues of out-migration, population decline and the subsequent impacts on community: population decline becomes seen as an illness in the social body: "If Cape Breton was a patient the doctor's prognosis on the state of its health would not be an optimistic one" (*Cape Breton Post* 2001). Another article underlines that contemporary population decline is notably different from migrations in the region's past:

> A report ...projects that the population of Cape Breton will fall by 53,000 over the next 17 years..., a decline of more than a third of the population...In the face of such numbers it is no longer tenable to make light of the Cape Breton predicament by trying to put it in the context of the island's long history of out-migration and population decline (*Cape Breton Post* 2004a).

Meanwhile, in the letters section of the paper people discuss their helplessness in regards to this situation and critique the notion of demographers using statistical knowledge to tell them what they already clearly see within their communities: "Wow, I thought, just what we need, another government funded study to tell us what we already know; young people are leaving for other places and other opportunities" (*Cape Breton Post* 2004b). Others note that Cape Breton is continuing its tradition of providing labour for the development of other regions:

> While residents of Alberta sometimes begrudge the generosity of federal transfers to eastern provinces, they tend not to apply a value to the eastern workers who are playing such a vital role in the growing economy in western Canada. This is a "subsidy" that regions like Cape Breton cannot really afford over a prolonged period." (*Cape Breton Post* 2006)

The reports (CBCEDA 2007; CBRM 2009; ECBC 2009; Stantec 2010; Terrain Group 2004) agree that the area was initially populated and subsequently grew in

population to provide workers for the coal and steel industries and was thus populated to provide labour to an industry which no longer exists. From here, it seems that a fairly linear argument can be made, that capitalist disinvestment produces a host of social consequences such as high unemployment rates, out-migration and subsequent population declines.

Yet such reports have made a more dynamic and interactive model than the one I suggest above, one which focuses on only two variables: economic decline and population decline. Concerns of unemployment, child poverty, lower life expectancies and other consequences of life in a marginalized area come to be bracketed off. Meanwhile, issues of capital disinvestment become removed from historical context of power relations and ahistoricized under the label of "economic decline". The connections between the two types of decline are sometimes contradictory even within the same report but in general a circular equation is put forth: in this equation, economic decline influences population decline as high unemployment and fewer employment opportunities "push" individuals to out-migrate. Simultaneously, the consequences of such population decline mean a smaller tax base for the municipality to provide services and maintain infrastructure and a smaller pool of potential labourers and consumers to attract business investment in the community which further leads to economic decline. Economic decline and population decline enter into a circular equation in which one begets the other in a seemingly perpetual spiral.

However, in these reports, the causal links become confused as population has gone from being seen as a symptom of economic decline to being the main cause. While

it is accepted that population decline emerged from conditions of economic decline, it is surmised that the way to reverse economic decline would be then to reverse population decline. Population becomes the key problematic and the issues of capital disinvestment which originally provoked such conditions become ignored and obscured.

Local governance structures and regional development agencies have made the issue of combating out-migration part of their key mandates. One such report underlines this line of thought, addressing how the principal solutions for the economic issues of the region are to be found in reversing the population flows:

> Population loss remains a challenge for the Cape Breton economy... More work and collaboration will be needed in the future if Cape Breton County is to become an area with sustainable population retention and in-migration. Strategies for retention and immigration should be developed and implemented. (CBCEDA 2007:17)

Other regional development agencies have implemented annual conferences such as NextGen which gather local academics, policy-makers, community leaders and residents together to singularly discuss strategies for the retention of residents and attraction of former residents or the attraction of new residents. Meanwhile, ECBC, the federal government's Cape Breton regional development agency, holds plans to develop re-population strategies as one of its six initiatives in developing Cape Breton Island which includes "retaining current residents, attracting new residents, repatriating former residents and encouraging the formation of families to generate new births" (ECBC 2009:12).

Within these reports and as generally accepted within the governance structures of the CBRM, the mechanics of how population decline and economic decline interact are

clearly laid out, even if the question of causality remains contradictory at times. While this equation has been thoroughly explained, the idea of reversing economic decline through reversing population decline remains an unexamined assumption. The specific mechanics of the inverse of the equation has not been explored or examined by the regional development agencies and structures of governance which subscribe to these beliefs.

In 2009, the economic development branch of the CBRM was tasked with preparing an "integrated community sustainability report" to submit to the provincial government in order to access a new provincial/municipal tax-credit transfer scheme. Essentially, the report was intended to outline a ten-year plan on how municipalities would use the new modest source of funds to contribute to their environmental, economic, cultural and social "sustainability", a seemingly ambiguous phrase that remained ill-defined in provincial instructions for this report. Yet, the draft report which the CBRM economic development officer prepared focused squarely on outlining and explaining the consequences of the population/economic decline equation that I have outlined above and in an emotive outpouring uncharacteristic for the typically austere realm of governmental reports, concluded that the region simply is not currently sustainable:

> In every census period since 1961, the population of the region has declined...The significance of this scale and scope of decline for a regional economy is that it completely undermines the health and well-being of all constituent communities and the region as a whole as well as all of the institutions and organizations that comprise the social and cultural fabric of the community...It gradually but inevitably deprives the region of the most basic ingredient for viability which is hope, particularly when each successive decade reveals a gathering downward momentum...So decline, like growth, is a dynamic process and decline begets further decline unless there is an

> intervention of sufficient scale and duration to stabilize the situation... (CBRM 2009: 15-16).

The draft report concludes that "something" must be done to halt and reverse the population decline but remains mute on what that "something" may resemble and what may happen should the decline reverse.

The draft report was unanimously rejected by CBRM's council as portraying an overly pessimistic portrait of the region and while identifying the problems of the region, not providing any viable solutions. The council voted and approved a motion to use the creation of a new integrated community sustainability report as an opportunity to identify real and viable solutions for the region's issues and contracted the creation of the report to the Halifax branch of a Canadian professional design and consulting company, Stantec, at a $200,000 price tag.

Penny and Jonathan: Returning to Cape Breton and the Difficulties of Return

In the same period of time that various regional economic development agencies were elaborating on the equation that population decline begets economic decline for Cape Breton and assuming that the solution for the region's economic ills lay in convincing people to move and to move back, Penny and Jonathan's household was in the midst of preparing for their own return.

Up until the year before their actual departure from Edmonton, the idea of returning to Cape Breton was not something the family had seriously considered at any other point in their lives. Yet, having made the decision to do so, Jonathan and Penny began to feel a certain excitement towards the prospect. While many of the people they

knew had left Cape Breton, many of their former friends still remained in their home community and they looked forward to re-establishing ties. The opportunity of raising their daughters in their own hometown where they were raised, outside of the "urban jungle" of Edmonton, continued to motivate the young parents. Meanwhile, Penny's mother told them how, in their returning, they were completing a pattern that many of their relatives had done before, coming back home after a time "away" and remarked on how Penny's life was paralleling her own as she had spent a large portion of the 1970s in Calgary and returned to the Northside when Penny was an infant.

In retrospect, Penny notes how the week-long drive from Alberta to Cape Breton was full of foreboding signs that the return would not be the wonderful re-entry the family had anticipated. As they drew closer to Nova Scotia, their car radio continued to inform them that a potential economic recession was just around the corner:

> It's funny – as we were driving east from Alberta, that's when the economy was starting to tank. As we were getting closer to here, that's when the economy was going down, down. All over the place. So any kind of opportunities that were here kinda fizzled out, right?

And as if to mark their crossing the half-way point between "away" and "home" as they entered Toronto, a massive explosion at a propane storage facility rocked a neighbourhood north of the highway with the ensuing re-routing of traffic trapping the family in an hours-long traffic jam.

Within their first few weeks back in the region, the family settled into the rental house that Penny's mother had secured next to her own home and Jonathan began his search for local employment. He was able to find several short-term, informal jobs through contacts with several relatives in the area but a secure and permanent job eluded

him. The economic recovery that the family had heard about in the area, from friends, family, media reports predicating labour shortages in Nova Scotia and the Come to Life program, proved to be a mirage, and the prospects in the area seemed as dismal as ever. Only two businesses remained in the Northside Industrial Park, a call centre and a car parts manufacturing facility, and the latter was rumoured to be in the process of shutting down.[73]

Yet, despite the stresses involved with moving across the country and an unfruitful job search, Jonathan looks back on the period of his first few months "back home" with his family as a welcome respite. After eight years of working "on the road" with only a few weeks at home between contracts, this time afforded him the opportunity to be with his family and to be able to spend a prolonged period in the role of a father. Jonathan explained to me about how, during this span of time, he realized how his daughters had adapted (perhaps, to his chagrin, too well) to the family's particular organization of work and life and he felt increasingly uncomfortable whenever one of his daughters would nonchalantly ask when he was eventually going to be "going away". "They deal well with me going away. They really do. Yeah. They're a little bit too comfortable with it. They really are. They've grown up with it."

Yet, the job search continued to go badly. The couple realized that Jonathan was not only competing with local residents for whatever scarce job opportunities opened up

[73] The Magna automotive parts manufacturing facility did close several months later in December 2008, citing difficulties due to the economic recession. After its closing, the Northside Industrial Park was devoid of industry.

but also with a large diasporic population of Cape Bretoners out West with aspirations to return. Penny explains that:

> What we're finding is that whatever job opportunities become available here, not only do you have local people, you have everyone out there wanting to come back again. Right? So you have one or two openings and you get fifteen hundred applicants, because everyone, they want to get a job in Nova Scotia Power or Marine Atlantic, something that's going to pay well around here... Everyone out there's got their eyes on the help wanted boards down here and things like that.

It was Penny that broached the subject of Jonathan returning out West.

> It was a hard decision to make. It was a really frustrating decision. Um, it was funny, he was, he was just kinda staying here and kept trying, kept trying [*to find work*], even under-the-table cash type jobs and things like that. And finally, I hated to have to do it, I kind of had to say, "You know what, you really have to do this". I mean, I don't want to have to see him go, the kids don't want to have to see him go but at the same time we have to live, right? It was even getting to the point where we were starting to use money that we had saved up for my school, just for living expenses. So that was a hard decision to make.

Jonathan contacted his Albertan union, placed a bid for an upcoming job out West and was accepted. After having been back "home" for three months, he found himself returning out West. In separate private conversations, Jonathan reveals that he had thought somewhat about going back and had retained his union membership in the Alberta union while looking for work in Cape Breton as a back-up plan for such a contingency. Although a fact unspoken to one another, both Jonathan and Penny had understood that the reason that they were able to take the risk of moving back home is because the opportunity to work out West as a mobile worker was always in the background for Jonathan. "I didn't actually think she'd want me to do it again, the back-and-forth. I thought she'd want us all to move back out West when I couldn't find

anything down here. I was kind of surprised, to be honest, that she suggested me doing it again."

During our conversations over several months, Penny frequently reiterated themes around the difficulties of return on two main fronts: the social exclusion she felt in that people in the area maintained close-knit social groups from which she found herself barred entry and the lack of employment opportunities in the area for Jonathon which she saw as a direct lack of involvement on the part of local and provincial governance in bolstering the economy and which had put her, by forcing her husband to return out West, in essentially the role of a single mother while she completed her studies.

Penny admitted that she was profoundly disappointed in the reception that she received when she returned. She had a number of acquaintances from high school that still lived in the area and she anticipated recreating the large social circles of friends that she had during her teenage years. Upon returning, she made contact with her old friends and had them over for coffee several times. Her friends were part of an informal group of women who mainly worked at the local call centre. At her insistence that she wanted to meet more people, her high-school acquaintances allowed her to come along to various gatherings at their friends' places, for coffee on Saturday afternoons or for a beer on Friday evenings. Yet, after several weeks of interacting with the group, Penny still felt that she wasn't accepted, that she was still seen as "so-and-so's friend" and an outsider within the social circle while none of the women in the group made much of an effort to include her in their conversations. She would occasionally meet members from the group around town or in the grocery store and found that they would maintain a superficial

cordiality while making some small talk but that such encounters remained shallow. After a couple of months, Penny came to realize that this close-knit group had no desire or inclination to include or accept her. She had become increasingly frustrated with being the one initiating social encounters with her so-called friends and inviting herself along for social meetings in which she was still regarded as an outlier. She stopped contacting her former friends and gradually lost contact with them. Part of the reason she had desired to move home were for the sense of belonging and the dense social networks. A sense of belonging as Cohen (1985) notes, is primarily an act of boundary-making, one in which Penny found herself on the side of exclusion.

Looking back on the events, Penny notes that being excluded from these social groups was not a huge loss for her. Once she had stopped vying for their attention and her desire to be accepted, she realized that she didn't find the individuals in this group all so interesting. While she had been "away", she had, from her perspective, lived some unique experiences, she found the people she encountered who hadn't left the region retained a "small town" mentality where conversations revolved primarily around complaining about boyfriends and about jobs at the call centre. She invested herself more deeply in her relations with her family while maintaining contact with a friend from the area that she had met in Edmonton who herself had moved back three years prior. Together, they would share in their social separation, joke about the parochial attitudes they had encountered in their return while noting that since they had been "away" they had lost their "Cape Breton status" to become "CFA's" or "come-from-aways" , the derogatory term Cape Bretoners give to people not from the island.

Yet Penny pointed out that while the return didn't lead to the social contact that she expected, she and her family were content being back regardless. While a hot summer day in Edmonton meant staying inside a cramped apartment with her daughters or a walk to a crowded mall, in the Northside it meant a trip to the nearby beach or playing in the backyard of her comfortably sized bungalow. Her two daughters had, unlike herself, seamlessly adapted to living in a small town and had found a large group of friends through school.

But she still maintained a deep-seated bitterness about the fact that Jonathan had to go back out West. He had finished one contract out West and had returned once again for several weeks to search, unsuccessfully, for local work before putting his name in once more to go out West.

Politics and economic issues are particularly issues of public interest in Cape Breton with the impacts of both have proven to have tangible and long-lasting impacts on the local population. A very public form of community discussion and debate is the letters section of the *Cape Breton Post* where various letter writers have become essentially regular contributors critiquing and commenting on various political issues, policies and local community issues. The newspaper's high acceptance rate of letters received allows such writers to debate their positions back-and-forth in the daily section, sometimes over a protracted period of several days or weeks.

In spring 2009, leading up to a provincial election, a regular letter contributor published a letter under the heading "Politicians drive away our younger workforce" which briefly critiqued the electoral campaign and current government policies aimed

towards garnering support from the over-50 segment of the population while high taxes and lack of opportunity continue to push out the younger workforce and contribute to the Maritime brain-drain effect. Penny found this letter strongly resonated with her and Jonathan's circumstances and affirmed many of the regrets she harboured about the family's recent move back. She immediately wrote a response letter, published in the Post two days later:

> I completely agree with [*the "Politicians drive away our younger workforce" letter-writer*]. I have seen little to no effort on the part of politicians this campaign to assure the people of Cape Breton that they will help draw steady, living wage jobs for the trained people of the island.
>
> I returned to Sydney Mines last fall. My husband and I decided that Edmonton was too big and busy for raising a family and we wanted to come back to a simpler life. For the second time in less than a year, my husband and I have made the hard choice to accept that he will not make a living wage here. He is heading back to northern Alberta in the next couple of weeks.
>
> I am heading to school in the fall to become a nurse and I have to look forward to four years of school while being a single parent to our children. My husband is a journeyman trades person and I will graduate an RN. Why should we stay in the area to spend our tax dollars which have the potential to be a large amount? Why should we raise our children here knowing that when they are finished school they will probably leave?
>
> The politicians have done nothing to assure my family that things will change around here.[...]I want to make a living wage and to support the community with my tax dollars. However, when I see nothing that helps me and people like me, why should I do that? I don't want to be on Employment Insurance for the rest of my life and I don't want to collect welfare. What is the province doing to help me out with that?

Penny purposely took on a neoliberal argument in her letter, attempting to underline the pragmatically economic rationales local and provincial governance structures ought to realize for wanting to attract young working families such as her own

to the area. Penny didn't expect much to come of the letter and was surprised when people reproached her for her letter and its negativity. She relates that:

> I got a lot of flak from that. Alot of people said "you're coming here with a bad attitude, you're using our infrastructure, taking advantage of our health care, schools and everything like that, when you're turning around and planning on leaving again." Like, I didn't feel a whole lot of support from the community. It kind of shocked me.

The *Cape Breton Post*'s on-line edition supports a forum function which allows readers to post on-line un-moderated comments about a particular article or letter and has greatly expanded the potential for discussion among letter-writers and readers in the community. In the case of Penny's letter, the majority of comments left attacked her for her viewpoint. Beyond one comment from a Northside woman who had moved to Ontario and advised Penny to "keep faith", the other comments were negative and pegged her as having a callous attitude in coming to the area while interpreting her fears of having to leave once more as a lack of commitment to the local community. Others reflected her neoliberal argument: "That simpler life to raise your family... comes with a cost to us taxpayers that stay here and contribute to the economy", attacking Penny as being dependent in expecting the government to play a role in providing for her.

Penny, who had initially assumed people would support her idea of having policies in place to attract and retain families and would understand that she and her family would have to begrudgingly move again once more should things not improve, found herself in the unanticipated position of having to defend her views on the on-line forum. Several days after her letter was published, she responded to the public criticism addressed to her on the on-line discussion forum:

My husband would not have to work in Alberta if the province did do more to attract and keep long-term employment. The original plan was to move back, go to school and have him work in the area. After I was done school, then we would stay here and buy a house—set up a life, that sort of thing. I would love to have us both stay here and contribute to the economy—that was the original plan. Believe me, having him away was not the original plan. It is not a fun life to live, it is not easy on any of us, especially not the children. He has spent ten months now trying to get a job here in Cape Breton. He has applied within his job scope as well as jobs that he is over-qualified for.

My point is that why should we stay when the province is not doing anything to keep young families here? Yet again I am making the decision I made 15 years ago, the same decision that many of my family made 30 years ago. When does Nova Scotia, specifically Cape Breton finally do something to stop the flood of young families from leaving the area?

I would like to not have to make the decision to live or leave.

As for what I am contributing while I am here: my husband may have to work in AB but at tax time he still has to pay NS taxes. NS taxes that get put into the same pot that everyone else contributes to for schools, healthcare, roads, etc. I am still paying HST while I am here. Oh and while he is working in AB, he makes enough for me to pay for school without having to suck the teat of NS social programs. Don't suggest that I am getting a free ride here. Bottom line is that my kids have to be separated from their father in order for us to live here, it's a choice that many others have made as well and it's not something I wish on other young families. The whole time we were away we heard about NS wanting the young people to come back. Come back! Come back! To what? To seasonal work and living off EI?

Drive down Main Street of North Sydney and Sydney Mines. They are ghost towns. Don't you think that they would be bustling booming town centres if there were more families staying? [...] Why so bitter to a native returning home and trying to make a life of things?

On The Difficulty of Returning

Notions of home and the returning to home, remain powerful sentiments. Homes "have become geographical havens within modernity, intimate places which provide important elements of identity to modern human beings" (Markowitz 2004: 23) offering respite from the often complex and complicated world. Home contains ideas of protection

and a place to belong as "the healing response to all other places and peoples, the starting point and endpoint that provide a reprieve to all phases of in-betweenness" and a protection from the forces of modernity and contemporary life, being "security, comfort, certainty, the people who "have to take you in" while understanding that the "have to" is not a matter of externally imposed law but an automatic response to similitude" (Markowitz 2004: 24). And yet, others have noted that migration and movement is a "a one-way trip" with "no 'home' to go back to" (Hall 1987: 44) while a return "is not to find oneself in the same place as before" (Rapport and Dawson 1998: 33). Or at least, to return is to create a new space: "You can go home. But you can't start from where you left. To fit in, you have to create another place in that place you left behind" (Stack 1996: 199).

In his review of migrant typologies, Gmelch (1980) notes that such typologies often take as a starting point whether a migrant sees their move as temporary or permanent and whether return is assumed from the beginning. Yet as Gmelch underlines such intentionality is not always initially present. Not everyone starts off with a developed plan in hand while plans are always open to revision and improvisation. Many do not preclude the possibility of either settling or moving on and wait to see what the future brings rather than departing from a starting point in which future intentions are decided. It is not so much that migrants want to be placeless but rather that they are "perpetually postponing a decision on permanent settlement" (1980: 138).

Gmelch's 1980 review of migration and return, published in the year when Penny's parents (with an infant Penny accompanying them) were involved in their project

of return to the Northside, is eerily accurate in underling the difficulties of the Penny and Jonathon's return some thirty years later. Gmelch notes that across the literature dealing with return, motives for return often hinge on the economic, although he noted principal motives for return stem from desires to be reunited with friends and family and out of an appreciation of the place of "home". Gmelch notes that in theory return migrants ought to have an easy time with return: they understand the social mores and norms of the place to which they are returning, they typically have social networks in place prior to returning and they generally want to succeed in their return. But the reality is that many, despite being economically better off than their neighbours, become "disappointed and disillusioned" (1980: 142). In the difficulty of return, homesickness is replaced with discontent with the term "reverse culture shock" arising to describe this process of discordance (1980: 143). It is noted that often those "at home" play a role in producing a romanticized image of return, coming to exaggerate "the benefits of life at home while underplaying or even ignoring unemployment and inflation" (1980: 145). Yet once the returnee has arrived such social groups show little interest in inclusion while the returnee realizes his status as an outsider. Discontent emerges from unrealistic expectations of home and what home would provide while hopes for creating deep social bonds in the community of home become dashed as the returnee discovers that "local people have developed new friendships during the absence of their migrant friends and are not always enthusiastic about resuming old relationships" and that their own personal interest in maintaining such relationships fades upon the realization that "relatives and former

friends no longer share the same interests and seem narrow, overly provincial and in some cases backward" (1980: 143).

Solving the equation of population decline

While Penny came to accept the realities of home and new uncertainties towards the future, the CBRM struggled to resolve how it would deal with the prospects of population decline. And ultimately as Penny has found, the structures of governance that wanted her to move back have no idea what to do once she does. The trend of population decline is one the CBRM would like to reverse but an elaboration of what the region would look like if people actually did return is sorely lacking.

Stantec, the consulting group tasked with producing a future plan for the CBRM in the form of an integrated community sustainability plan, spent months consulting with residents and community leaders in the region in order to prepare a report to show how Cape Breton Regional Municipality could become "sustainable" over the coming years. The solution they eventually came to offer was to abandon the complexities of the circular equation of population decline perpetuating economic decline and accept that the region had been created to fulfill a role in a particular capitalist system. With that role now extinct, the region had to take it on itself not to maintain a population but to adapt to its role in providing for a decreasing population base (Stantec 2010).

After these months of public consultation, town halls and focus groups, Stantec released their results during a conference open to the public. The results were coldly pragmatic, concealed in long discussions on the aims of the integrated community

sustainability plan report, methodology and attempts to consult as broad a base of the local public. John Helestine, the lead analyst in charge of the report, presented a demographic analysis of the region and reconfirmed that the population is aging and declining. He underlined this point by showing a PowerPoint display of an archetypal "healthy" population distribution graph which resembled a pyramid with a strong base of youth supporting a medium sized group of middle-aged adults, a peak consisting of a small minority of those aged 65 and older and followed with a population projection of the CBRM in 2020 as exactly the inverse of the "healthy" population pyramid.

Helestine asked a pointed rhetorical question of why population decline, in the context of the CBRM, has such a long history of being considered to be a "bad thing". Why, in the face of lack of industry and jobs, high rates of unemployment and declining infrastructures, were people so committed to maintaining their towns and villages and wanting people to move back to them? He continued that there would be one main reason that could be offered to why maintaining towns and villages in the area would be a good thing.

Listening to his presentation, I recalled how during the various public consultations and round table discussions I attended, he and his team had posed similar questions to the public in attendance and were met with emotive responses about how people were preoccupied that the places where they grew up and raised their families were in danger of sinking into the past and becoming ghost towns. They felt a particular way of life, a way of life they valued, was fading away as more and more youth moved to the cities and industries of Halifax, Toronto and Alberta. They expressed desires for

people to return and reinvigorate their communities while simultaneously expressing fears that this may no longer be possible, that their conception of community was no longer relevant for the contemporary world.

These were the responses that Helestine did not draw from in composing his answer. Rather, he responded that the main rationale for maintaining the towns and villages of the CBRM would be that they already possess intact infrastructure and with so much investment previously made in constructing roads and sewer lines, it would be a shame to not have them used. This was a somewhat disarming response and not exactly the answer about the appeals to the sentiments of the continuation of community, tradition and history that the crowd was expecting.

During the consultation process, many had critiqued Stantec as holding an urban bias and feared that their coming recommendations would ignore local histories and focus on a rational economic plan of centralizing services in CBRM's former urban centre of Sydney while leaving the surrounding towns and rural communities to languish. The full report was made public several days after the conference on March 30th 2010 and it confirmed precisely these anxieties. It underlined that for the CBRM to continue to function as a municipality it would have to accept that the region's role in the national and global economy has changed. It was no longer a series of industrial centres and working-class populations but a post-industrial and aging community with no economic centre save for a emergent health care industry providing for the growing population of retirees.

The report instructs that a "planned contraction" (Stantec 2010:5) of the CBRM would be in order and that measures must be taken to centralize infrastructure, services and the population in the area of Sydney. In the meantime, difficult choices are to be made to "close and decommission schools, churches, homes, fire stations, community halls, arenas, ball fields and other facilities that are no longer justified by demand" (2010:2). The report notes that these measures will present a point of contention for residents who do not want their communities fundamentally changed but that these measures are necessary; the aims of the region have to be directed towards adapting to a new economy and "not to recreate the thriving industrial community of CBRM's past" (2010: 8).

The area as I have noted and which has become a repeated theme in reports concerning the region's economic future, was established as a series of company towns housing workers for coal mines and the steel mill. The region's *raison d'etre* was to provide labour for a particular set of industries employed in particularly exploitive conditions with raw resources and base materials being exported to provide for the industrial development of central Canada. Gibbs and Leech (2009) surmise that the conditions of liberal capitalism under which the region became populated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was fundamentally a model which depended on harshly exploiting a working-class population in order to ensure its continuation. It was ultimately an unsustainable economic model, to which there is no replacement nor economic alternatives for the region and as such, Gibbs and Leech consider Industrial Cape Breton to currently be "an over-populated rural region" and "an experiment in

industrialization that went wrong " (2009: 44). Remarkably, Stantec's report confirms this analysis:

> The decline of local industries and the associated loss of population... have placed the Regional Municipality in a difficult position maintaining infrastructure developed for a much larger population distributed to serve economic functions that have ended (Stantec 2010: E2).

And yet, people don't see their towns and villages as simple arrangements to service the needs of capital but rather as the communities in which they live and the places to which they have grown attached and are loathe to abandon them to the ravages of time. Beynon and Hudson remind us that "locations that, for capital, are a (temporary) space for profitable production, are for workers and their families and friends, places in which to live; places in which they have considerable individual and collective cultural investment; places to which they are often deeply attached" (1993: 182). And yet, Stantec's final analysis concludes the importance of the economic, that if people no longer have an economic rationale to stay, relocate to or return to the region, they won't.

Penny has made realizations along similar lines and her hopes of a smooth and welcome return have been met with hardship and heartache. "You put your roots down here and you want to stay and you want to come back and make it try to work, again and again". And yet, she wonders if it is worth it, to try so hard to make a return, if it only delays the inevitable dissolution of the community and separation of her family:

> Yeah, I don't want to see them (*Penny's children*) grow up and feel like we had to make the same choices we made, move all the way out to Edmonton. Or even farther...We want to move back but at the same time, when our kids grow up, we don't want to watch them have to grow up and move away so far.

In regional economic development literatures and within the discourses of the CBRM's governance, families like Penny's are seen as the solution to the region's

economic decline. Yet the mechanics of how their return is supposed to reverse the economic decline of the region remain enigmatic and unexamined. Meanwhile, Penny sees her family's relationship to the local structures of governance differently – she does not see themselves as playing a primarily initiating role in the area's economic recovery but rather hope that the local structures of governance will assume the responsibility for creating the economic conditions to allow their household to be viable. In the end, both parties expect the other to take on roles which they are not prepared to accept. In the process of creating and subscribing to this equation, the initial cause of the issue – capital disinvestment – remains unexamined, unanalysed and obscured.

Conclusion

How Things are Falling Apart: Concluding Remarks on Labour Migration, Classed Subjectivities and the Hegemony of Home

> There is something strange about the way we study migration. We know, often from personal experience but also from family talk, that moving from one place to another is nearly always a major event. It is one of those events around which an individual's biography is built. The feelings associated with migration are usually complicated, the decision to migrate is typically difficult to make and the outcome usually involves mixed emotions... And yet, when we study migration scientifically, we seem to forget all this. Migration is customarily conceptualized as a product of the material forces at work in our society....the migrant is seen either as a "rational economic man" choosing individual advancement by responding to the economic signals of the job and housing markets or as a virtual prisoner of his or her class position and thereby subject to powerful structural economic forces set in motion by the logic of capitalist accumulation (Fielding 1992: 201).

> You asked me a while back if I got any advice for a young fellow tryin' to make a go at it in Cape Breton nowadays. Well, here it is: "Go West, young man."
>
> - George (personal communication, August 2012)

Ethnographically, this dissertation has examined an emerging circuit of interprovincial migration between the Oil Sands of Northern Alberta and a de-industrialized region of Atlantic Canada, known colloquially as Industrial Cape Breton. Over the past two decades, the Oil Sands have transformed from a costly experiment in oil production hidden in the northern Boreal forest to a mega-industry employing over a hundred thousand workers situated at the centre of the Canadian economy. The development and rapid periods of expansion in this industry's construction and ongoing maintenance have been made possible due to large pools of what can be referred to as a reserve industrial army – former industrial workers scattered across Canada (and to a

lesser degree from beyond Canada,) who as the results of various processes of de-industrialisation in North America, find themselves un-and-underemployed. The Oil Sands industry has made use of these various labour pools, establishing routes of migration between the industry and various de-industrialized communities and making use of such workers as contingent and flexible sources of skilled labour to expand and maintain the industry, to the extent that over 30,000 estimated workers in the Oil Sands are temporary, contingent workers, working in the Oil Sands while calling an elsewhere "home" (Ferguson 2011; WBRM 2010). One such elsewhere is Industrial Cape Breton, the name which signifies its industrial past yet belies its post-industrial present. A former centre of coal mining and steel milling, the region came to be strongly connected to the Oil Sands industries following the demise of these two central industries at the turn of the millennium as former industrial workers along with workers who were excluded from these Fordist labour processes began travelling back and forth to the Oil Sands in order to realize a livelihood and support their families.

From a theoretical perspective, this dissertation has explored themes of migration and classed subjectivities. I have been concerned with issues of the political economy of labour migration and the incomplete transitions of organizations of work based on tenets of Fordism to organizations of work based on the tenets of neoliberalism. In my analysis, I have utilised classed subjectivity as a concept to depict how our particular relations to production and relations to the organization of work come to subtly condition the way we define ourselves and interact with the world. I have examined how the transition from Fordism to neoliberalism within the North American context and increasingly within the

global context has involved a shift in classed subjectivities as new classed subjectivities come to be layered on former Fordist subjectivities. This superimposition entails a redefinition in what subjects are to expect and are conditioned to expect from their relations to work and to the labour process. I argue that labour migration as classed and classifying phenomena can serve both as a consequence and a cause of this shift of subjectivities and that the processes which allow for labour migration fall fundamentally within the scopes of a broader neoliberal project yet rest on the foundations formed through a pre-established Fordist project. Nostalgia for the promises of Fordism and the Fordist legacy allow for the establishment and continuation of certain forms of neoliberalism and of certain forms of labour migration.

This dissertation has made use of interventions from political economy to argue that class and migration are fundamentally interwoven concepts. Following from Lem and Barber, I have argued that class becomes a fundamental and central category of critical importance for analysis of globalization and that the forces which "produce and shape geographic mobility are also the forces that produce and reproduce class distinctions and differentiations in different locations" (2010: 4, *cf.* Lem and Barber 2008). Yet, the transition from Fordism to neoliberalism makes "class" an increasingly difficult category to talk about. In contemporary times in which seeing class as a collective identity formed on the proverbial factory floor seems to be an increasingly antiquated notion, class as an analytical concept has waned in popularity in anthropological and popular thought (Crehan 2002). It risks fading into the past or being re-defined as merely a label referring to socio-economic status. Meanwhile, the relations

of individuals to production, to the economic processes in which we are enmeshed and how these relations and interactions come to form particular worldviews and understandings of self risk coming to be understated. Class is related to one's relation to the labour process and to production while practices of neoliberalism muddle how we come to conceptualize these relations as the current climate of precarity in work relations decreases the strength with which people identify with particular work identities. This dissertation has underlined how hegemonic processes both conceal and create new forms of worker subjectivities and the challenges involved with using class as an analytical and subjective category in an increasingly mobile, globalizing, fragmented and precarious world of work: processes of neoliberalism erase the very language which we can use to critique such processes and I take this to be quite troubling indeed.

Conceptual ideas such as the capacity of capital to create particular types of place, geographies of accumulation or spaces of capital, along with the capacity of individuals to attach their own sets of meanings to such places, even once the needs of capital have moved on, have figured prominently. In the first few pages of this dissertation, I made note of the myriad ways history comes to chafe against the present in Industrial Cape Breton. Sealed mine shafts, abandoned company houses and elderly men nostalgically remembering working together in the coal pits exist side-by-side in a present where the children of such men now venture westwards to work as precarious and temporary labourers, households realize new strategies to cope with changing family dynamics and municipalities deal with the impacts of when their roles as specific spaces of capital come to be radically redefined. Throughout this dissertation, I have laid out how the past

continues to shape how people see the world and how our relations to work are conditioned by past relations to work. I have made use of the term of Fordist subjectivity to refer to a particular classed subjectivity emerging from such relation which has conditioned people to perceive their relations to work and what they expect from their relations to work in a certain way. In a contemporary neoliberalizing world in which the world of work is offering much less to workers in the forms of stability, access to employment, remuneration and the opportunities to form relations with fellow workers, many of the former elements of Fordism are no longer anticipated and people's relations to the world of work comes to be altered in the meantime as neoliberalized classed subjectivities come to rest on the foundations of former Fordist subjectivities.

A major theme I detailed was how the communities of Industrial Cape Breton had been established as specific spaces of capital, populated and structured to deliver labour to the region's coal mines with the very design of such towns and villages around particular mine shafts being based on the principal of delivering workers to the pits efficiently and effectively. As such, the communities of Industrial Cape Breton were formed to deliver labour power in a very specific set of relations under a specific set of contexts. Yet despite such underlying rationale, people living in such environments come to layer their own meanings onto such spaces of capital and onto such relations of production themselves, either in parallel to relations of production or, in the case of early worker struggles in Industrial Cape Breton, in order to change aspects of their relations to production. Communities came to form within these processes and social relations and meanings which go beyond the purposes originally intended for such spaces of capital

were developed by those inhabiting these places. While hegemonic processes come to intermingle with meanings of place (Harvey 1990), community (Joseph 2002) and family (Dagenais 2008 and Ulhman 2006) to ensure the continuation of production, individuals, households, families and communities still come regardless to ascribe great symbolic meaning and personal relevance to such spheres of life—such built environments and the relations within them become more than what immediate processes of capital requires from them.

I began this dissertation with the story of the Sydney harbour dredging plan as an ethnographic example of how individuals were able to grasp on to the tenuous possibility of the re-emergence of industrial work in Industrial Cape Breton. This vignette opened a central line of thought that a certain nostalgia for a former world of work both motivates people to be critical of current working conditions and, paradoxically, to come to accept the neoliberalizing world of work regardless. As a spring-board in which to conclude such lines of argument, a town hall meeting held in Donkin serves as a penultimate ethnographic instance in which the longing for an idealized Fordist past come to underline certain hegemonic processes in which the impacts of a neoliberal future seem inevitable, underlining how connections to the past and longings for previous forms of work serve to conceal work arrangements of the present. From this point, this chapter underlines issues of home, classed subjectivities and labour migration discussed to this point before offering final remarks on the interwoven issues of class, gender, transitions of classed subjectivities and the hegemony of home.

Miner Issues in the Shifts away from Fordism

The village of Donkin has been affected by sets of circumstances that have impacted communities throughout Industrial Cape Breton: it had been over a decade since the last of the mines had closed and over the past decade Donkin has been dealing with the aftermath. High unemployment rates and high levels of out-migration had become the norm and residents were in the process of dealing with the environmental consequences of a century of intensive resource extraction.[74] Perhaps more importantly, the widespread feeling that a particular way of life had faded into the past marked everyday life in the village.

Yet, Donkin was unique in Industrial Cape Breton in that it was actually facing the possibility of a renaissance of its coal mining industry. It had been a number of years since Xstrata, a multinational Australian-based resource extraction corporation, announced its interest in rehabilitating some of the local mines and re-commencing coal mining in the area. The announcement several years ago that Xstrata would begin preliminary project exploration with the hopes of reopening the area's mines breathed, as many would come to repeat, feelings of *hope* into the area. But it was a hope laced with pragmatic cynicism. The area has seen its share of corporations promising to invest in the region only to cancel a proposed project at the last minute or, worse yet, to stay for a few years and leave once the government subsidies had expired (Morgan 2009; Barber 1990; Gibbs and Leech 2009).

[74] Old mine shafts were found to have been dug too close to the surface and certain buildings in town (including an elementary school) were found to be structurally unsafe and slowly sinking into the ground. The former industry could be said to have undermined the town not only economically but structurally as well.

As such, this particular town hall event was one of many such community meetings held throughout the late 2000s in Donkin in which the village's development association[75] conveyed and debated information about Xstrata's attempts to re-establish mining in the area. This town hall meeting, however, was the night when an Xstrata representative would be in attendance to finally announce—after months of discussion and waiting—Xstrata's decision on the mine's future and reveal if coal mining would once again take place in Industrial Cape Breton. Whereas the previous meetings had been held in the small Lion's Club hall, Donkin's development association expected a few hundred of the village's residents to attend and opted to hold the meeting in the larger nearby fire station.

In the days leading up to this announcement, the tension in the air in and around Donkin was palatable. Only a week before the town hall, after several years of modest pre-exploratory project development, Xstrata reported to local media that its main potential customer for Donkin Coal, Nova Scotia Power, the electrical company of Nova Scotia which runs several coal-burning electricity generation plants in the province, had confirmed that it would not enter into a contract to purchase Cape Breton coal and instead continue to import fuel for its plants from Columbia. How Xstrata would react was subject to much conversation and worrying at the local Tim Horton's with many believing that this would be the final nail in the coffin of Cape Breton mining. Leading up

[75] Donkin, like most towns and villages in Industrial Cape Breton, held official town status with political representation in the form of a mayor and council. In 1994, when the towns and villages of Industrial Cape Breton amalgamated to form the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, town statuses were lost and towns and villages of the region lost a degree of political representation with mayors replaced by regional councilors representing defined geographical areas. In the absence of town-specific representation, many towns and villages have formed development associations made of volunteers of the community to attend to village-specific concerns that may otherwise be overlooked by municipal councilors.

to the town hall, the local newspaper added to the tension with the ambiguous front-page headline the day before the meeting reflecting the doubt and lack of information throughout the region: "Donkin Coal Mine could go Ahead or be Cancelled" (*Cape Breton Post* 2010).

The evening of the town hall, the small parking lot of the fire station was filled to capacity with cars and old pick-up trucks lining the narrow main street of Donkin in either direction. Inside, the concrete floor of the station was crowded with over two hundred metal folding chairs, each seat containing a grim-looking man or woman, faces wrinkled and weathered and familiar with difficult times. With standing room only, several dozen had assembled in the back of the hall assembling into groups chatting amongst one another loudly. Several members of Donkin's development association, several local politicians and two men in navy blue suits who I did not recognize sat behind a long table at the front of the hall.

As the clock hit seven, people gradually quieted down and focused their attention on the individuals sitting before them. With little fanfare, Hugh, the chairperson for Donkin's development association, stood from his chair behind the table, approached the microphone at the front of the hall and briefly thanked the crowd for coming despite the snow and wind before turning the microphone over to Jeff, the Xstrata representative. The balding men in the navy suit replaced Hugh at the microphone and addressed the crowd.

Jeff's speech, delivered in a heady Australian accent, was long-winded and broad. He gave a lengthy history of Xstrata's interest in Donkin coal, jocularly commenting on

the difficulties of navigating both federal and provincial regulation bodies and the difficulties of working within Canada's environmental policy frameworks. Eventually, Jeff came to comment on how Xstrata had lost their one prospective buyer for coal, Nova Scotia Power. He came to explain that Xstrata had decided not to cancel the Donkin mining project altogether but to instead search for buyers on the world market, rebranding the coal as a coking product for steel production rather than a thermogenic fuel source for electricity production. As his long speech continued Jeff vaguely alluded that if Xstrata managed to find buyers on the world market they may be in a position to develop a scaled-down version of the mine they had originally envisioned which could potentially employ up to two hundred people from the local area at some point in the future. He rather pointedly explained that this change in direction would mean further delays and further governmental regulations to address and permits to be approved while Xstrata searched for potential markets, all while reminding the crowd about Xstrata's ability to bring back a way of life that many believed had faded into the past:

> So, one thing I do know is that the opportunities for this area are in Europe. I don't think there are a lot of opportunities in the U.S. But we're looking at opportunities in Brazil, we're looking at opportunities in India and we're even to the point of seeing the possibly of coal going all the way from Nova Scotia to China. The price is there to support this…What's important is that the resource base of this mine is sufficient to support this mine for 25 years. This is more than about setting up a mine, this is about setting up a life-style in this area, more akin to the lifestyle that used to be here and the jobs that used to be here.

Jeff concluded with a pointing statement that once they manage to "cut through the red tape" Xstrata can start to "create some jobs" and "make a difference in this area".

Jeff's choice of ambiguous phrasings and talk of possibilities and delays did little to fill me with optimism for the region's future of mining. From my point of view,

standing at the back corner of the hall and watching several hundred faces listening intently as Jeff delivered his speech with the confidence and practiced calmness of a man that had most likely delivered similar speeches to de-industrializing and desperate communities across the globe, it seemed that the Donkin project would suffer the fate of many other industrial projects that had been announced in Industrial Cape Breton since DEVCO had began trying to attract industries to replace mining in the region in the late 1960s. Such projects were never cancelled suddenly or with surprise but rather suffered a death of a thousand delays. With no buyers for Donkin coal and a site of production far from any potential markets and no actual current plans to develop a mine or hire any local workers, I sensed that Xstrata was foreshadowing its fading interest in this small community on the periphery of the Canadian state. The future of coal mining in Cape Breton was still uncertain and in doubt.

And so, I was admittedly dumb-founded by the crowd's reaction as Jeff concluded his speech. As he thanked the crowd, the entire fire-hall, overflowing with nearly three hundred people, broke out in a thunderous applause that lasted several minutes. Groups of people stood from their chairs to give the Xstrata representative a standing ovation while others loudly cheered.

Jeff smiled broadly and nodded to the crowd as he turned the microphone to Alfie MacLeod, the local member of the legislative assembly and representative of the Nova Scotia government. Alfie waited several minutes as the applause died down and people sat down once more before beginning his statement: "Well, I think it's a pretty good night, don't you?" A booming applause rang through the crowded Donkin Fire Hall once

more and Alfie had to pause for a moment for the clamour to die down as continued his speech:

> Now, one thing that's been ignored in the community over the last little while is that Xstrata makes sure the community comes first and I have no doubt that that will continue on to be that way. There will be some hurdles that we'll have to meet. But we will meet them as a community and as a group of people that want to see their community succeed. I think the one thing that I know tonight, is that we have *hope*.

Alfie MacLeod turned to address the two Australian businessmen, the visiting representatives of the multinational mining corporation, Xstrata and began to address them directly.

> So, from my perspective as a provincial MLA, I will work with you to make sure that we can do what we can working with our current government, to get these approvals in place along with our federal counterparts.
> So I congratulate you for coming here and I thank you for the good news, because I agree that it is good news, it's a step in the right direction.
> And if we ever needed good news, it's probably right now as we move forward as a community and as an island, to get rid of some of this negative feedback we hear about how things are falling apart.

The crowd offered more thunderous applause for Alfie MacLeod as he concluded his speech and handed the microphone to John Morgan, mayor of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, who added in a few short words of his own:

> I also want to thank Jeff for the announcement. I also want to thank everyone for coming out here today. One of the reasons that this project has remained alive throughout some difficult times with people saying coal mining in Cape Breton was at an end, is because people here in Donkin and Port Morion and all the CBRM believe that in fact, coal mining hadn't ended in Cape Breton.

The event continued with several other representatives of all levels of government addressing the crowd with short speeches, offering reaffirmations of their commitment to

help the multinational mining consortium surmount governmental regulations while reminding the crowd how they had supported Xstrata and the Donkin mine project from the beginning.

A question-and-answer period consisted of the public affirming their support for the project and asking how they could support Xstrata in their dealings with provincial and federal governments with members of the public openly proclaiming:

- It seems to me that Donkin is not dead but in fact it's going to have some life added to it.
- I'm a coal miner and the son and grand-son of a coal miner. Thanks for stickin' with us!
- What can we do to help you guys get this thing going? Because we too have to do our part. We won't let you down!

The town hall concluded in typical Cape Breton fashion with Hugh inviting everyone to stay for a snack as the Ladies Auxiliary set out a long table of coffee, tea, donuts and home-baked goodies.

I milled about the hall with my Styrofoam cup of tea and a date square. A reporter from the local branch of CBC radio with tape recorder and microphone ready to be switched on at a moment's notice, approached me to ask if I hoped to get a job in the mines and if so, if I cared to do an interview. After I briefly explained my research project he looked somewhat dismayed and commented that he couldn't find a single person at the meeting that actually wanted to work in the mines (I too had noticed earlier that very few people seemed to be under the age of fifty with a majority of the crowd in the sixty to seventy age range). As I continued to stroll about the hall, a second reporter,

this time from the local newspaper, the *Cape Breton Post*, asked me the same question of my intentions to find work in the eventual Xstrata mines. Visibly disappointed with my explanation of my role, she tried her question again "So do you think that you might still consider a job in the mines anyways?"

Afterwards, I spoke at length with Hugh. Hugh, being familiar with my project, had invited me to many of the town halls leading up to tonight and had been central in explaining many of the community impacts of the long-distance commute. As we chatted, he said that he wasn't surprised with how positively people had reacted to the news yet was somewhat dismayed that no one seemed to be concerned about the potential environmental concerns. I mentioned my experience with the reporters and the lack of younger people at the meeting, to which he quickly replied, "Sure. What do you expect? They're all working! They're all out West working. And that's why we want to get this mine going so badly, to bring them back and get them working here." Hugh began to point to various people in the crowd. "See her, her husband's out scaffolding in Fort Mac. You should talk to her. And her, that one there, the one there with the striped shirt. Her husband had a saw mill, making timbers for the mines. When they shut 'er down, he was out of a job. Now he's laying pipeline somewhere in New Brunswick."

Eventually, people slowly left the fire station while the tea and snacks gradually dwindled, at the same time as the politicians enthusiastically talked with the reporters and posed for pictures. I ventured outside where I found a group of four elderly men, former DEVCO coal miners as I would discover, that were smoking and talking about the events of the evening, heartily musing about how the reopening of the mines will change the

village for the better. I joined their conversation and they continued to share their optimism with me. One exclaimed that "Yeah, for a while they thought Cape Breton was at the end of the earth. And now we're gettin' our due. We got this comin' in, people are going to be working again and this place is going to be humming and buzzing again."

During a lull in their conversation, I asked the four if they would ever want to work in the mines again. There was a moment of silence as the men puffed on their cigarettes. The oldest of the four, who had quiet and laconic for most of the discussions, tersely replied to what must of seemed like an inane question: "No, of course not m'boy... I'm too old for work now." "And so are the rest of us old farts" another chimed in. The first man continued, ignoring the latter's comment, "This here is for our sons. I'm tired of them having to work out West." He took a long drag of his cigarette. "And they are too. I wants them to come back and work here." The other three nodded in agreement. We spoke for a little longer about the work their sons do out West with one explaining to me how his son, wife and two grandchildren have moved out West for work a few years ago while another tells me about how his son's wife and children still live in Donkin while he's in Fort McMurray and that he tries to come back to see them as often as he can.

In Donkin, Sydney Mines and the other towns and villages in Industrial Cape Breton, people gave their labour to the mines; some lost their lives in this dangerous profession while others now deal with the lingering health effects of working in the pits. In return, the mines offered more than a livelihood and a stable income—the mines also offered a particular way of life, the development of particular relations with one's co-workers and the establishment of particular forms of community. Within the spheres of

life between the needs of production and human needs outside of the direct purview of production, images of what it means to be a worker came to form, and particular classed subjectivities came to form in which individuals and households came to relate to the world of work in particular ways.

As with the example of the dredging project with which I begin this dissertation, for the people of Donkin who attended the fire station town hall, Xstrata's promises to open a coal mine is not purely a question of employment but rather a matter of reinvigorating a particular style of life, community and family dynamics that developed in tandem with the Fordist form of societal organization (Ulhman 2006; Dagenais 2008; Simpson 1998). Such relations have slowly shifted towards neoliberal forms of work organization, most strongly felt in Industrial Cape Breton through forms of mobile and temporary relations to work. While roads leading to the mine-shaft at the centre of town were an endearing reminder of how workers come to be connected to production, the connection of labouring bodies to distant relations of production in an increasingly globalising, mobilizing and neoliberalizing world become more ephemeral and abstracted. While many attendees at the town hall could claim to be from families with multigenerational links to local coal mining, these same individuals now find their sons and daughters involved in and impacted by distant labour processes in industries they can scarcely comprehend.

Those in attendance at the Donkin meeting remind us of the importance which social actors continue to accord to place and home, the continued desire for the stability to be found in the idea of home and the continuation of such stability for ensuing

generations. Despite claims that the connection between people and locality has eroded under powerful global flows such connections between people and location continue to persist and be of importance in terms of rights, relations, identity and livelihood (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Stefansson 2004; Olwig 1998). The idea of "rootless mobility" being the defining and predominate experience of contemporary life as contrasted with "rooted belonging" (Ahmed *et al*, 2003: 2-3) has been called into question and into doubt. Despite the propensity for increasingly globalized and mobile lives (Rapport and Dawson 1998), we are reminded that:

> [P]lace-making remains a fundamental process for humans. Creating a place for one's self and for one's group is central to personal and social existence. Losing one's place because of these global processes may be one of those post-modern ironies that engenders a heightened awareness not only of the place lost but also of the centrality of being-in-place to self, identity and community (Gray 2002: 39).

In a similar line of thought, Amit underscores how the dissolution of the importance of place and the presumed facility which social actors form communal relations aligns with certain late capitalist aims which strive to keep labour flexible and transportable. Through an ignorance of the "work" which goes into place-making and creating/sustaining social relations:

> [W]e can also end up inadvertently supporting a neoliberal tendency to treat human beings as if they can and should be infinitely portable, unencumbered economic agents. For, after all, if people can easily form or sustain collective affiliations across space and time, then why shouldn't they be encouraged, even required by their employers or their governments to move? It would be ironic if, having spent a fair number of years criticizing and distancing ourselves from our anthropological forebearers' penchant for conflating place, culture and collective identity amongst highly localized groupings, we ended up adopting the same analytical nonchalance for more mobile social relationships...The construction of communities should never be treated as simply probable (2002b: 25).

Yet as we progress into the neoliberal era, labour mobility becomes necessary and expected of more and more people (Sennett 1998), despite the wishes of those, like the former coal miners of Donkin who desire for their sons to, like they once did, work "at home". The previous phase of work organization of the Fordist era was highlighted by the presence of secure, steady, full-time and "decent" industrial jobs based in place and has been gradually replaced with neoliberal ideas, policies and corporate structures favouring free-flowing capital, flexible accumulation and flexible work arrangements. Yet the transition from Fordist to neoliberal work arrangements rests on multiple foundations, one being as I have argued throughout, the connections which individuals have come to forge to particular place, in the form of home. In her analysis of an Industrial Cape Breton community two decades prior to my study, Barber noted the proclivity of Cape Bretoners to express strong connections to locality. In the face of difficult political economic conditions, residents retained such strong feelings of belonging and community loyalty with Barber hinting that the concept of home becomes evoked most strongly when its continuation is seen as threatened (1990). My analysis builds from this, in that such sentiments of home come to be subsumed within neoliberal logics: home acts as a critique against neoliberal logics that would prefer individuals to be placeless and infinitely mobile while, paradoxically, the concept comes to allow such subjects to become accepting of mobile livelihoods in order to continue ideas of home.

For many of my informants the Fordist past has been idealized. In my analysis of the transitions to neoliberalism this is a trope I have aimed to avoid. This former

conception of classed subjectivity is one inherently rooted in former conceptions of masculinity and all too often based on exclusion and patriarchal relations. For this reason I have underlined this transition as one based on nostalgia and idealized images of the past, equally for those included and excluded from such relations. Meanwhile, the fading of a certain masculinised, blue-collar worker from Western conceptions of family life have greatly altered classed and gendered relations within and beyond the family (Deutsch 2002; *cf* Barber 2002a) as a particular basis of family and roles of fatherhood and motherhood come to be redefined in a post-industrial era (Broughton and Walton 2006). For many of those in the villages and towns of Industrial Cape Breton (as I particularly underline from the case of Penny and Jonathan) migrant labour to the Oil Sands comes to be a way to realize certain industrialized, masculinised identities no longer available at home such as that of the blue-collar worker or "breadwinner". But at the same time such mobile work lives come to markedly change other roles and identities (for instance, shifting what is expected from motherhood and fatherhood). Labour migration, then, may be seen as a route to access resources—economic and symbolic—necessary to claim a male adult status at home while in the process changing and shifting other roles.

Along these lines as Crehan notes, feminist thought has expanded what Marx means by the organization of production to include the reproductive functions such as rearing of children and care of family members, reminding us that "How this frequently unpaid labour is organized and who is given the responsibility for performing it is an important dimension of any society's class landscape" (Crehan 2002: 194-5). Barber,

similarly notes how in the case of classic labour struggles, class resistance in the work place would be impossible without women's reproductive work in the home space. Class comes to be collectively created through the family and through the labour process (1992).

In his review on literature on the labour process on the global scale, Blim underlines how gender and ethnic differences are exploited by processes of capital in order to gain greater control over the labour process (1991: 18), a point particularly underscored in Barber's 1990 ethnographic analysis of gendered divisions of labour in Industrial Cape Breton's fisheries. Concomitantly, the gendered dimension of migration has all too often been ignored (Rothstein 2010). As I have squarely underlined this issue in the exploration of Ann's experiences in the work-camps, the Athabasca oil sands / Atlantic Canada migration circuit consists of two separate yet interdependent migration circuits: one based on providing labour for the production of surplus value, another based on providing labour dedicated to the reproduction of this labour supply in which a highly feminized workforce is employed to ensure the proper day-to-day functioning of these work-camps and the upkeep of the mostly male industrial working population housed within these camps. Migration as a whole is profoundly informed by class but divisions within this circuit are revealed by noting how access to certain positions of work comes to be shaped through gender. Although the work camps' essential purpose is entirely devoted to the needs of production such camps come to be redefined as imperfect replica of domestic space while such relations come to be embedded and reinforced in the built landscapes within this circuit of labour migration.

Subjectivity and the hegemony of home

In the process of developing the principal arguments of this dissertation I have made use of hegemony and hegemonic process as conceptual and heuristic tools to explore the subtle functioning of power in contemporary life. Neoliberalism has increasingly taken on a hegemonic character as certain aspects of free market ideology become increasingly commonsensical and logical. Yet as an avenue for analysing functions of power, hegemony risks becoming all-pervasive and leaving little room for human action outside of such processes or become simply shorthand for "culture" (Smith 1999; Crehan 2002). To temper such risks I have made use of the work-life narrative to identify how individuals perceive and articulate their own role within such processes in order to underline that such processes do not unilaterally dictate nor fully determine our interpretations of and our interactions within the world. Humans retain a certain capacity of interpretation, recognition and refusal (*cf.* Rapport 2011). To refer to the meeting point of individual capacity for interpretation and the power dynamics which shape the social and material fields in which we operate, I have made use of the concept of subjectivity with a particular focus on classed subjectivity.

Hegemonic processes demand certain forms of labour while such processes demand certain idealized classed subjectivities. At one historical point, capitalism required a stable work force over long periods of time and from this emerged (yet not without struggle and renegotiation) Fordist classed subjectivities in which such stability and security was seen as desirable and commonsensical. The current atmosphere of free market ideology requires individuals who are self-managed, willing to accept risks once

assumed by capital and willing to adapt to and adopt additional tenets of neoliberalism such as flexibility, mobility and precarity.

But the requirements of market forces and the desires of individuals do not necessarily run parallel. As individuals and members of families and communities, we are more than what hegemonic processes demand from us; the idealized subjectivities that market forces demand are non-realized subjectivities which exist in the abstract. Individuals, through a host of factors come to realize and animate certain subjectivities and in the process come to take on the qualities of such neoliberalized classed subjectivities. But such adoption of subjective values and ways of life are not uncritically received without recognition or resistance. Frustratingly for owners of capital, workers and potential workers, as studies of Taylorism (Braverman 1974), the labour process (Burawoy 1979, 1985) and neoliberalism "from below" have shown (Barber and Lem 2010; Winson and Leach 2008; Gershon 2011), have never been completely nor infinitely malleable to market forces and needs of production. Individuals with their wants and needs which do not directly correspond to the needs of production at all times such as family (Ulhman 2006; Simpson 1998), leisure (Dyck 2002), social connections and community (Joseph 2002) while also simultaneously existing in fields of hegemonic process, come to impact and play a role in how such subjectivities come to form.

Meanwhile, hegemony is underlined as process, in constant shift and flux while the contradictions of capitalism come to create its own roadblocks (Harvey 1990, 2005, 2010). The idea of the Fordist classed subjectivity that I have spoken of throughout the dissertation emerged from the dual prongs of the needs of capital for stable, secure

workforces for long-term, large-scale production operations which only become profitable after long amortization periods, combined with workers' struggles in which capital's need for such stability was leveraged to assemble worker movements and create conditions of work that were fairly remunerated and beneficial for the worker (Harvey 2005, Standing 2011; Sennett 2006). As Gramsci noted, Fordism was primarily aimed as an effort to create a certain kind of worker and a society with which to support particular forms of production (1971). Elements of the Fordist classed subjectivity were beneficial for capital as workers would tolerate certain difficult work conditions in return for the normative orientation offered through the world of work. The period of Fordism represented a very brief element in the history of capitalism, enduring little more than one generation (Sennett 2006). These conditions of stability are no longer commonplace in the North American/European world of work with the Fordist compact all but completely dissolved (Standing 2011). Yet, the classed subjectivities emerging through Fordism in terms of those who worked, grew up or otherwise lived in situations in which such work relations existed, continue to linger and fundamentally shape how individuals perceive their relations to and expectations of the world of work.

Such subjectivities result in individuals seeing a neoliberalized world of work as a poor substitute for previous Fordist relations and are resistant to whole-heartedly accepting what would be entailed with assuming an idealized neoliberalized classed subjectivity. Capitalism, in its contradictions, creates its own barriers (Harvey 2010) as the relations which aided production in the past interfere with the relations which will aid production in the present.

For George, Ann, Penny and Jonathan, working in the Oil Sands industry as contingent, precarious and temporary labour is hardly the ideal work situation that they envision and one they take part in critically and reflexively. For George, being a back-and-forth worker in the oil sands does not mean an abandonment of ideas of solidarity with his work-crew, the possibility of fostering a stable career-life and finding some degree of control over his future work life. He sees such work as a way, alternatively, to create his own individually-mediated version of a Fordist-style stable work career or to serve as a temporary measure until such a work situation can be found at home. Meanwhile, Ann commits herself to work in the work-camps not because she finds such work intrinsically rewarding. Rather, she is aware of the mental and physical damage she is subjected to in the "prison" but yet accepts to remain in this work institution as her sacrifice today gives her a modicum of stability and control over her future. Penny and Jonathan, for their part, saw their return to Industrial Cape Breton as an escape from the back-and-forth commute work of Jonathan and the beginnings of a stable home-life and work-life for their young family. Jonathan's necessity to become a back-and-forth worker once again is seen to be a necessary evil while they plan to leave Cape Breton once again to find stability elsewhere. In the exploration of their work-life narratives, they are reluctant and recalcitrant about abandoning Fordist classed values which posit work as stable, secure and a place of relations amongst fellow workers and adopting subjectivities which entail individualized and flexible relations to work.

And this is where the paradoxical, contradictory nature of the interplay and interweaving of processes of hegemony and formations of subjectivity comes to be

revealed. While a certain nostalgia for Fordist relations and the vestiges of Fordist classed subjectivities lead individuals to expect and to desire more from their relations to work in a neoliberalizing context, it is this desire and these attempts to realize past working relations, to recreate Fordist lives, which lead such individuals to acquiesce to neoliberal logics and to accept, albeit with reservation, the mobile, individuated and precarious relations to work demanded in a neoliberalizing context of work.

Meanwhile, hegemonic processes further reinforce the appearance of neoliberal logic as commonsensical, taken-for-granted and above all inevitable if not altogether desirable. Hegemony is constituted not just by the ideational but by the material as well (Crehan 2002) and Harvey's notion of spaces of capital has allowed for an appreciation of how the formation of particular geographies of accumulation lock certain relations into place which come to necessitate the establishment of certain subjectivities. The Oil Sands industries and surrounding region were established to support and necessitate temporary labour and to ensure that temporary labour becomes a necessary and commonsensical component of this production process. The physical landscapes, physical institutions and built environments formed in these contexts further contribute to the subjectivities which come to be formed, operating very much as technologies to discipline workers into accepting and consenting to certain relations to work and to the production process.

Concluding Remarks: An Island and a Rock in the Sea

As both a cause and result of these processes over the past two decades, Northern Alberta's Oil Sands industry has developed from relative obscurity to a central

component of the Canadian economy. These industries have been constructed and expanded through a reliance on temporary labour, a reliance which shows no signs of slowing. Perpetually temporary labour continues to be an enduring and escalating feature of the Oil Sands industry with such labour recruited or attracted through a host of factors from various regions undergoing processes of deindustrialization and economic decline. In the meantime, larger and more sophisticated work-camps will continue to become permanent aspects of the region and temporary workers constituting growing proportions of the Northern Alberta population creating the built environments which both permits for temporary labour and makes the continued existence of such temporary forms of labour commonsensical and uncontested. Meanwhile, Atlantic Canadian communities such as those of Industrial Cape Breton, continue to supply temporary labour to the Oil Sands while such back-and-forth movements of mobile workers continue to have a variety of social, cultural and economic impacts, both negative and positive within such communities.

Yet as I have examined, temporary labour is an inherently flexible form of labour provision, useful not only in its ability to travel to where labour is required but to leave once that labour is no longer required. Such labour has thus proven particularly convenient for resource industries prone to cyclical periods of expansion and contraction. In the expansion period of the past decade, the Oil Sands industries provided the conditions for the emergence of circuits of migration from various regions where labour was in abundance. By the late 2000s following the economic downturn, this dynamic had reversed and workers in Industrial Cape Breton quickly learned of their precariousness in

this organization of labour. Eventually, unemployed workers became willing to assume various costs of mobile work that had once been covered by the employer and in realizing and adjusting to their newfound contingent status such workers came to accept less from their relationship to this pattern of work.

Over the course of the 2000s, various changes, some obvious, others more subtle, had taken place which shifted many of the costs of this migration route from Oil Sands industries and sub-contracting companies onto workers themselves. The direct charter flight from Sydney to Fort McMurray had been cancelled and more workers were funding their own travel expenses to the Oil Sands. Many workers who had previously been lodged in work-camps were now venturing out West and finding their own temporary accommodations in Fort McMurray. Individuals were increasingly enrolling in safety training programs at private institutions, training that was previously company-paid as part of incoming workers' orientations, in hopes that it would improve their chances of being employable. The economic downturn emphasized this type of work arrangement as precarious and unstable and had allowed the industry to take measures which further reduced the cost of labour. Yet the ensuing prolonged periods of unemployment did not cause workers to reconsider their relations with this particular work organization but rather to accept and adapt to their particularly uncertain and contingent situations. In short, these circumstances conditioned labour to accept less in a situation in which they were already particularly vulnerable, to accept neoliberalized classed subjectivities in which they took upon themselves much of the responsibility and risk once held by employers. Such workers have had to discard the dream of secure, full-time employment

in Industrial Cape Breton and accept the idea of embarking on career-long cycles of temporary labour migrations and yet now additionally find themselves implicated in paths of unsure and unpredictable work trajectories in increasingly neoliberalized work arrangements.

Partway through my fieldwork I stumbled upon a curious letter in the Cape Breton Post under the heading "Stay-at-Home Capers the ones showing real courage." To end this conclusion, I repeat here in its entirety, including the appended editor's note:

> The days of wine and roses are over. To all you easterners who dug in your heels and begged, borrowed and stole to keep your friends and families in Cape Breton, props and congratulations.
>
> I wish I never had to leave. I made my way out west by way of Ontario to make a living and now employers are cutting back wages and giving more work and less time to do it.
>
> So all you who wish you had the courage to go to the camps out west, you are the ones with the courage because you bore the storm. You do whatever it takes because you bore the storm. You do whatever it takes there instead of living a life with all the backstabbing, cut-throat activity and lying from the so-called buddies you'd have to work with out here.
>
> Out here your bed is not cool; someone else is in it. As the old song goes:
>
> *Pop a top again*
> *I just got time for one more round.*
> *Set 'em my friends*
> *Then I'll be gone*
> *Then you can let some other*
> *Fool sit down*
>
> Out here you're just a number and always replaceable. So hats off to you. You are an island, a rock in the sea. You have a lot to be proud of. You are my courage.
>
> [Editor's note: Though the writer calls Glace Bay home, here's her note on her current location: "Right now I am at a camp five hours in the bush outside of Edmonton. I love my job but it certainly isn't like it was a year ago.] (Cape Breton Post 2010b)

Epilogue

Twenty -Five Years of Injury-Free Service: An Ethnographer's Work-Life Narrative

Throughout the dissertation, I have, in rather broad strokes, introduced the Oil Sands industry and its connection to other de-industrialized areas in Canada which through processes of labour migration have come to serve as sources of reserve labour for such industries. I have pointed out how securing sources of energy and energy policies are of key focus to both state and capital interests while the labour which produces such energy undergoes various processes of disciple to ensure their continued consent in such relations of production. Finally, I have laid out the argument that the shift in relations of production from Fordism to neoliberalism has also entailed a fundamental shift in worker subjectivities as workers are conditioned to expect a different quality of relations to the world of work.

In parallel with these rather large-scale processes and broad historical circumstances I have included the experiences of those who live within such processes and are impacted by these processes. I aimed to strike a balance between the larger historical, economic and global structures which shape the circumstances of subjects' lives with their own while taking into account individuals' own capacity to retain a degree of control in their lives, to at least partially recognise, reinterpret and navigate through the structures in which and through which they live.

To accomplish this, I made use of the work-life narrative as a methodological tool, inspired by approaches using narrative style research methods (Jourdan 1997; Rapport and Overing 2000), in particular the life-story (Linde 1993; Peacok and Holland 1993) and the life-history (Blackman 1991; Crapanzano 1984) and to as I have noted in the prologue, turn neoliberalism's individuating lenses back upon itself.

Throughout this dissertation, I have noted the paradoxical nature of how Fordist subjectivities concomitantly provide both the grounds for resistance and critique of neoliberal logics and neoliberalized subjectivities and yet also allow individuals to consent towards and accept such logics and redefinitions of the self. I have hoped to use the methodology of the work-life narrative in a reversely paradoxical manner: while neoliberalism strives to individuate and fragment workers, I endeavored to use an individual-focused method to counteract such broad-scale and pervasive narratives and to argue for the salience of class-based realities in fragmented work settings and the continued desires for stability and collectivity when processes of neoliberalism have made such elements more difficult to realize in people's lives. There are several reasons why these three work-life narratives in particular were chosen for the present dissertation. On one hand, I found the experiences of these individuals to be extremely representative of the experiences of the many others I spoke with over the course of my fieldwork. The challenges, impacts and rationales for their participation in such mobile work organizations and their histories of work and connections to conceptions of home were shared with many others involved in the commute. On the other hand, the selected individuals, in their varied and idiosyncratic experiences, represent the diversity of

experiences to be found in this organization of mobile labour: the stories of a young labourer beginning a career of mobile work, a kitchen attendant approaching retirement and a family of four habituated to mobile work trajectories underscore the complexity of experiences to be found in the emerging connections between Industrial Cape Breton and the Oil Sands.

However, in assembling such work-life narratives and in carrying out the fieldwork itself I was constantly reminded about my own particular connections to the issues at hand and how these connections intimately forged how I came to perceive and approach such issues. This project, on labour migration, class subjectivity and the long-distance commute between Atlantic Canada and the Oil Sands has a personal connection to me which both includes and goes beyond intellectual curiosity. Having explored these issues over the past chapters, I hoped to spend a few pages addressing my own personal connections with this project at hand, to effectively turn the work-life narrative methodology onto myself, in the hopes that establishing my own particular positionality will aid the reader in understanding how I arrived at my own particular formations of class subjectivity and perspectives on Fordism, neoliberalism, deindustrialization and migration. I can not claim to have yet synthesised, found or achieved an understanding of "class" that is fully attuned to its conceptual potential but I do contest that class, through this idea of classed subjectivities, can have ongoing productive use. In doing so, I have strived to find ways to apply the concept of class which resonate with my own particular lived experiences and classed background; in other words, to find ways to make use of class so that it makes sense to me. Issues of

positionality and self-reflection often risk running into narcissistic navel-gazing but I do implore to the reader to allow me several pages to explore my own particular and quite often at times privileged relations to issues of working class realities in an area of industrial decline.

I have titled this epilogue "Twenty-Five Years of Injury Free Service" after the title of a framed certificate from the Stora Pulp Mill that my father had proudly hung in the living room of our old rural farm-house when I was around the tender age of seven or eight. I grew up on the outskirts of a single-industry town on the western side of Cape Breton Island, in a rural area not far from and not unlike the area of Industrial Cape Breton where I came to do the lion's share of fieldwork for this project. The core of the town and the economic life-blood of the surrounding Strait area was the Stora Pulp Mill, a huge factory perched on the hill side on the outskirts of the town, its smoke-stacks bellowing thick clouds into the sky twenty-four hours a day. My father, like many men of his generation began working at the mill in the mid-1960s while in his twenties and expected to do so all his life.

This was a working-class town and in living here I came to absorb certain working-class realities and make them my own.

Thursdays held a certain ritual, when my father and I would drive into town and up to the pulp mill to pick up his weekly cheque. On the entry road leading into the Pulp Mill parking lot was a large bill-board welcoming visitors and workers to the Mill with a statement at the bottom proclaiming "___ Days without Injury" with a peg allowing the number reported to be changed on a daily basis. As part of the Thursday tradition, I

would rattle off the number the sign reported as we drove past: "Eighty days without Injury!" or "Two days without Injury". I don't recall the number on the board going higher than one hundred and twenty days in the many childhood years that I took part in this weekly ritual while numbers higher than forty were rather rare. When the numbers were in the single digits, my father would typically know who had sustained the accident and would nonchalantly tell me a few details such as "Yep. A lathe took Jim's thumb last week." Or: "Yep. Some guy took a tumble into the steamer in the wood-room on Friday".

On rare occasions, some of my father's work-mates would stop by the house to visit and drink the jet-black tea that was perpetually brewing on the wood stove. They were a laconic and stern bunch, clad in their forest green work-shirts and pants, smelling of a mixture of motor oil, tobacco and sweat, and not prone to long-winded conversations and formal niceties. These visits would be punctuated by long periods of silence; gruff grunts in agreement about the damage early frost had wrecked on their potato gardens and hunting deer. The conversations would sometimes have some gallows humour about workplace injuries with one man telling the story about how he was promoted after his immediate supervisor fell into a wood-chipper. Another time, a tale about a man at the Mill who had recently lost two fingers in two separate incidents received hearty laughter from my father and the other two men. As the story-teller described, the unfortunate man lost the first finger to a machine while doing some routine task but then lost a second finger in the same machine a couple of weeks later when he had to show the safety supervisor how the accident had taken place.

In retrospect and in having gained some critical distance after having moved away from this particular set of realities, I see these tales and these lived realities as somewhat horrific. Yet, at the time, I, and I assume my father and his co-workers as well, saw these elements as a normal and accepted part of life.

From these relations to work certain perspectives emerged: particular relations to work, particular expectations from life and particular masculinities. The proper work for a man was to work with one's hands without complaint, to put in a good hard day's work and in return to be compensated with a reasonable livelihood and a secure job continuing on into the future, a stability of which a future generation would be envious. The mill would give you a living and sometimes—if you were unlucky—it would take something from you. If you were very lucky, like my father was, you would be commemorated with a certificate for not losing any of your self in a given period of time.

At the same time, my father and his co-workers occupied a rather privileged place in the working-class hierarchy of the town and represented what I refer to as the Fordist blue-collar ideal. Such men (and it was overwhelmingly a position held only by men) were unionized, comparatively well-paid in relation to others in the region while holding a secure job and as such standing in stark contrast to the unemployment and poverty that marked (and continues to mark) much of Cape Breton Island and various other regions within Atlantic Canada. Meanwhile, these particular relations to one's work and one's particular classed subjectivity emerge out of broader historical context. And coincidentally, much of the broader context which led to the rise and decline of Industrial Cape Breton and the eventual rise of the Oil Sands industry as explored in this

dissertation, are the same which led to the creation of the Strait area of Cape Breton where I grew up and which led to the creation of the possibility and expectations for a particular form of industrial work and a particular form of life.

The south-western side of Cape Breton Island (now named the Strait Area or Strait Region) was known as one of the lesser developed areas within a region defined as chronically undeveloped. Robert Morgan (2009), a folklorist and historian who transplanted himself to the Island in the 1960s, remarks how at times he would grow weary of the urban nature of his adopted home of Sydney in the centre of Industrial Cape Breton on the eastern side of the Island with its paved streets, restaurants and cinema and would occasionally venture out into the "real" and "traditional" regions of Cape Breton Island where the descendents of Scots displaced to Nova Scotia after the Highland Clearances of the mid-1800s and of Acadians that had settled around rugged and remote coves to escape the earlier Expulsion still lived off the land, hunting, fishing and farming during the day while playing traditional Scottish jigs and reels on fiddles in the evening.

Morgan presents a picture of the life which my parents lived in a rather romanticized version and not terrifically realistic, rather reminiscent of Tonnies' gemeinschaft and gesellschaft (2002), contrasting modern, capitalised society to the traditional, non-capitalized community. But his reflections do underline the point that this was a region in which, at this time in the middle of the twentieth century, the inhabitants had not yet been fully and completely incorporated into national and global capitalist economy.

To be sure, the Strait Region had a long history of incorporation into a global economy rooted in histories of initial European colonialism and extending onwards. The central town, Port Hawkesbury, was once Ship Harbour, a central ship-building centre and a pivotal port within the British Atlantic ship-trade network. As rail replaced sail and Industrial Cape Breton rose as a central source of coal to power the steam engines of central Canada's industries, the Strait Area's main economic activity came to be a transfer point for rail-cars laden with coal which were transferred onto ferry boats and transported across the Strait of Canso before continuing their trip down the line to the factories of Quebec and Ontario (Foote 1979).

Owners of Industrial Cape Breton's coal mines had long seen the Strait Region as a bottle-neck in their business of transplanting coal westwards with shunting of rail-cars onto and off of ferry boats time-consuming while the waters of the Strait of Canso froze in winter, making ferry transport impossible. In the 1950s they succeeded in building a causeway across the Strait with the collaboration of the provincial government so that rail-cars could run directly from the Island to the mainland, bypassing the Point Tupper ferry service. While this greatly improved the efficiency of the coal company's transportation network and their profits it destroyed the economic centre of the Strait Region. A local resident recalls the day the bridge opened:

> After the Causeway opened up, no one around here looked like they were going to have a job. We call the day the Causeway opened "the day the lights went out". We knew we had to get something to do but we didn't know what. Still, not too many people left, this was our town and we weren't going to leave it. Where could you go? Our homes, our relatives and our friends were all here. There wasn't any place to go, really (Foot 1979: 43).

And yet, the creative destructive capacities (Harvey 1990) of capital emerged. The Strait of Canso is one of the deepest straits in North America. In order to construct a causeway linking Cape Breton Island to the mainland a nearby mountain was exploded and the hundreds of tonnes of rock dumped into the Strait to create a massive underwater wall of stone, an act of determined construction that would probably not pass any environmental assessment today. The creation of the causeway had an unintended effect: this wall of stone prevented Northern Atlantic waters from flowing southward, keeping the southern portion of the Strait of Canso from freezing in the winter.

At the same time, the Canadian State was in its own processes of modernization and in the midst of creating a national economy and working towards the goals of national energy independence. The Strait Area was identified as a site of development. Due to the unintended consequences of the Canso Causeway it was now home to the largest year-round ice-free harbour in eastern Canada and one of the few harbours on the eastern seaboard large enough to accommodate super-tankers and other massive ships while containing ample numbers of un-and-underemployed individuals. The Strait Region, then, was marked to be the site of a series of massive industrial projects and governmental interventions. The village of Point Tupper was expropriated by the Federal government and zoned as a large-scale industrial park and the small town of Port Hawkesbury zoned as a service centre and housing area to provide for the many incoming construction and industrial workers. During the 1960s, the "boom" period was underway and by 1973, the Heavy Industrial Park contained a General Electric heavy water plant, a Gulf Oil refinery, a deepwater port terminal, a Nova Scotia Power Commission coal-fired

electric plant to power the industrial park and the Stora Pulp Mill (Foote 1979). A political economic view may have seen this initiative as one of accessing reserve labour but for the Canadian state, it was defined rather as a development project within a chronically impoverished area of Canada (Pross 1975).

Leading up to this period, my parents lived in an old farm-house with my father's parents. Forms of migrant labour were common in this period and my father and grandfather worked together on the railroad travelling throughout parts of Canada and sleeping in bunk-cars with various work-crews constructing parts of the rail-line which ran through Canada while my mother and grandmother attended to the fields and live-stock at home. The "traditional" Cape Breton described by Morgan quickly modernized with dirt roads being paved, electricity in houses becoming commonplace and phone-lines spreading throughout the region. My grandparents' farm-house was remote and too far in "the woods" to benefit from many of these modernizations but as my oldest sister approached the age where she would begin school, my parents, in 1971, decided to purchase a farm-house of their own closer to the newly paved road so that the children could take the school bus to elementary school in a nearby village. Although I was not born at the time, my older siblings tell me about how excited they were when they first encountered the interior plumbing of their new home and realized that the out-house was a relic of the past.

This modernization continued through the eighties. I remember various other instances of "modernity" such as at the age of eight when we had a hot-water heater installed in the house and no longer had to rely on the wood stove to warm our bath

water, and when we had installed a private phone line. My father continued to hunt deer and rabbit and grow his own crops but certain aspects of modernity introduced various conveniences to our household. Our livestock of goats and chickens came to be replaced by cow-milk and eggs bought at the grocery store (the goats were gone by the time I came around, although my early childhood days began with collecting the day's eggs from the chicken coup). My father's life which had been previously divided between a regular seasonal selling of his labour in a capitalist market mixed with a farming lifestyle on the periphery of a capitalist economy came to be replaced by an industrial organization of work-life which shaped his (and our household's) day-to-day existence.

Yet as often is the way, sometimes even the best-laid plans of state-led development come to fail (*cf.* Scott 1998). The industries of the Strait Region's Heavy Industrial Park all came to decline for a variety of reasons and global factors over several decades, save the Stora Pulp Mill. Yet, the Mill's existence in the region was long marked with doubt. New technologies required fewer workers while the Mill's owners continuously threatened mill closure citing various factors of high labour costs and global competition. In the background of my childhood and adolescence in Cape Breton a militant and well-organized paper-workers union and a multinational corporation played out a tense and enduring battle, with the latter continuously weighing the benefits of collaborating with labour in one of its smaller operations versus capital flight. As I grew up, the Mill was dedicated to increasing production while reducing its labour costs, hiring only a handful of new workers to partially replace its retiring workforce while chronic unemployment and forms of contingent labour remained commonplace. A generation had

been raised into an atmosphere where industrial labour had become the norm and the ideal but for which such forms of work simply no longer existed.

A major reoccurring theme in this dissertation follows from Harvey's ideas of spaces of capital (2001, 2010) in that capital creates its own configurations of space, its own geographies of accumulation which allow for the ordering of production along certain lines. Yet I add that within these spaces of capital, people and communities place their own meanings onto these spaces and on the lives which take place within these spaces: meanings of community, subjectivities and aspirations come to be layered upon these spaces of capital, often creating sets of meanings which go beyond capital's initial intention or purview (Beynon and Hudson 1993). While the Strait area was primarily "created" as a site of particular forms of production, the communities that came to develop there came to add their meanings and their own forms of social relations atop of these economic circumstances and certain norms, ideals and ways of living life and anticipating life came to develop. When the economic foundation upon which these ideas of community and life began to crumble, the sustainability of these other meanings came to be called into doubt. As such, I grew up in a working-man's town where the future of what it meant to be a working man was uncertain. New forms of industrial work and new proposed mega-projects always seemed to be on the distant horizon, giving hope to young men that they too would enjoy stable industrial work. In my high school years, the Sable Island off-shore gas project was underway and a facility to process natural gas piped in from off-shore was proposed to be constructed not far from the failed Heavy Industrial Park leading once more to an "industrial renaissance" when good jobs would

be plentiful. My experiences to an extent paralleled many of my informants' own experiences discussed thus far. Many from my generation planned and were heavily encouraged by older industrial workers, to take training in the trades to provide labour for the construction and operation of this new plant. Meanwhile, every few years, the mill threatened to close, either due to a labour dispute or to claims of falling profits and the town was forced to reckon with the idea that it may become a ghost town. In a region where what it meant to be a working man was once clearly defined, young men grew up with unsure tomorrows.

The reader will probably have astutely noted a heavily gendered component to what I have said up to this point. The industrialized Fordist labour process was based around an exceptionally gendered division of labour with images of the home-maker and the bread-winner prevalent. This blue-collar ideal that came to be created as a nostalgic image of the Fordist past is a highly gendered image based around particular forms of masculinity and what exists as an ideal of the past for some provides memories of extremely repressive and gendered relations for others.

As a teenager and a young adult growing up in Cape Breton, I, like many from my age group, had a string of insecure jobs with my decisions to enter into these specific occupations resulting from my own pre-existing and developing classed subjectivity while such labour experiences came to further shape and impinge on my own particular worldview and formation of self. An important point to make here is that leading up to this point in my life formal education was not seen to hold much practical value among those with whom I had social contact. I had utterly no conception of what social scientific

research would consist of nor imagined that I would ever embark on some form of work carrying out a research project. Most people I knew and associated with were manual workers and I envisioned that my life as well would consist of some form of "pick-and-shovel" work. I expected to work with my hands and yet, given the conditions of chronic un-and under-employment in which I was raised, had low expectations for the world of work. I anticipated (like many other youth and workers in the area) that work would be inherently instable, and that my own work-life trajectory would be marked by varying periods of employment and unemployment in a string of various jobs. Growing up in a region of chronic unemployment I counted myself as exceptionally lucky to find employment with Kehoe Contracting during my final year of high school and for a period following the completion of my secondary education (kin and social connections count for much in Cape Breton; one of my better friends was the nephew of the firm's owner and helped me to secure this employment). This medium-sized construction firm specialized in building vacation homes for wealthy Europeans who admired Cape Breton's bucolic settings, lakes and oceans. My main task consisted of aiding in the construction of the basements of future vacation homes: removing concrete forms from poured foundations and laying down gravel around foundation walls before the concrete pads were poured. As such, for a period, my life consisted of shovelling gravel into wheel-barrows as part of a small work-crew.

While the job was not intrinsically rewarding, the fact that it was a job held value for us. The company's way of organizing work was undertaken in acknowledgment that there were many unemployed workers in the area. Work was not according to a standard

daily set schedule but rather as on-call work with certain workers being called in to complete a particular job or project when it arose. The company was typically in the midst of building a dozen or more cottages at any one time and work-teams were typically self-managed and assigned to work on a particular aspect of a cottage with little to no supervision. As such, each work-crew would self-report their worked hours. My work crew quickly taught me that our continued employment and our ability to be called in to work on further projects was directly related to completing work quickly and efficiently and that we were competing with other on-call workers at the company for a limited amount of work. And so, we would regularly under-report our hours: if we spent ten hours one day shovelling gravel to fill in a foundation base, we would collectively agree to mark down that we had worked eight hours, effectively volunteering two hours of our work-day to ensure continued employment. I quickly found out that such under-reporting was common with the company as workers would compete with one another to be seen as "hard" workers and to also ensure continued employment. While this meant that we were effectively being paid much less at the end of the day than the official minimum hourly wage, we rationalized that working for less was better than not working at all. I do not know how knowledgeable the construction firm's owner was about this practice but based on his own ruthless yet hands-off form of supervision, I do not doubt that he had some inkling of this practice. While not directly condoning it, he appreciated the flexibility and discipline that the fear of unemployment had on his work-crews.

During a particularly slow period when no new cottages were being built by Kehoe Contracting, I was able to find a short contract as an industrial painter in a local

shipyard, painting the deck, interior hull and inner chambers of an old fishing trawler that was being retro-fitted as an oil skimmer. I was initially excited to have the job with wages of eight dollars an hour a huge increase from the minimum wage I had enjoyed at the construction company. The work was brutally hard and as my foreman informed me at the beginning of the contract, the ship had to be sea-ready in exactly a month, and as such, the work had to absolutely be completed within this tight timeline. The month consisted of seven-day weeks of thirteen-hour days of "straight overtime" (which meant no extra pay given for work done beyond the typical forty hours of work in one week) with the foreman consistently reminding us that workers that couldn't keep up the pace would be fired and replaced with "fresh bodies". Burawoy has noted how unemployment serves as an element of labour control. The spectacle of the unemployed at the factory gates waiting to replace fired workers makes resistance within the labour process difficult (1979, 1985). In this case, the metaphor was true to life with several men loitering around the ship yard gates at any given time waiting to take on the jobs of any who were fired.

Over the course of the month, true to his word, the foreman would observe us working and if a worker began to show a build-up of exhaustion after several days of working at a gruelling pace, he was nonchalantly informed that he didn't need to come back the next day. One poor fellow, who only lasted three days before being let go, wouldn't accept that fact that he had been fired and patiently waited at the end of the dock for a day and a half, just in case the foreman changed his mind. By the end of the month, I had seen nearly a dozen men hired and fired and by the end of the contract, a fact that I still hold some masochistic pride in, I was the only worker who had been hired

on the first day that still remained (while my body was fifteen pounds lighter and my spine had developed an odd curvature that took a week to straighten out).

Shortly after, I took a job in a crab-packing factory for a large Japanese conglomerate in an Acadian village in northern Cape Breton Island, working in an assembly-line attaching steamed snow crabs to cardboard backings and boxing them for shipment to the Japanese market, working alongside a mixture of recent high school graduates from various parts of western Cape Breton along with older women and men from the village. My job consisted of standing in a rudimentary assembly line and securing steamed snow crabs to cardboard backings with elastic bands, in order to protect their delicate appendages and then arranging these packages into cardboard boxes. The job was taxing, surprisingly so since I was standing immobile for the entire working day and was much less physically exhausting than shovelling gravel. Yet, by the end of my shift, my feet would ache and my lower back would scream. Nightly, our freshly packed cartons of crab would find themselves on a chartered flight to Asian seafood markets, although at that point in my life, my particular placement in the larger global economy was beyond my worldview. The work was monotonous with each minute being the same as the one before and the one after. But despite the arduous nature of the work I was happy to have this particular employment—to have any job, in fact, and this is a point that in retrospection I have difficultly articulating. The job was adequate considering that the pay of slightly higher than minimum wage was seen to be a good pay and the opportunity for overtime when the crab catch was high led to a higher pay check.

Meanwhile, there was another worker, Rejean. Rejean's job consisted of walking around the factory floor picking up the boxes of packed crab from the end of each assembly line and carrying such boxes to a large machine which would plastic-wrap each box prior to shipping. I was deeply envious of Rejean. He was able to walk about, vary his movements and perhaps even chat with the plastic-wrap machine operator if we the packers were having a slow day. In the back of my head, especially during the days I found particularly monotonous and fatiguing, I reminded myself that if I kept my nose down, worked hard and played my cards right, then someday I could aspire to have a job like Rejean.

The one positive thing that I gathered about holding low expectations in relation to the work one expects to do, I came to realize, is that it does allow one a certain degree of freedom and a certain penchant for risk. With the crab season ending and the realization that Rejean would never leave his job so that I may replace him, I prepared myself to return to my job as a gravel shoveller at Kehoe Contracting. Then, one evening, a conversation with an acquaintance caused me to realize that I could shovel gravel anywhere I wanted. And so, in 1999 with a teenager's thirst for adventure, I found myself in Montreal after two days of hitch-hiking and a back-pack of my belongings with my work boots squeezed into the bottom. However, I soon found out that the city unfortunately had enough people to load gravel and after a brief stint of warehouse work, I discovered the pick-and-shovel job of the 21st century in the form of call centre work. For the sake of brevity and to attempt to conclude a story that I have allowed to go on too long as it is, suffice to say that call-centre work led me eventually to different

opportunities and different employments which in turn led to different perspectives which led to me applying to university as a mature student and come to eventually discover the world of social sciences in general and anthropology in particular.

The point of this rather long-winded foray into my own labour history comes back to ideas of classed subjectivity. During this period of my entry into adulthood, I remained aligned to the concept of the blue collar ideal, dreaming of somehow attaining a good, stable, industrial job. But I saw this particular work organization through nostalgic lenses rather than as a potential of the future. I anticipated my world of work-life as one of floating from one job to the next with relatively little expectation for security and while holding what I would now label, following from DeRoche (1987) as a certain tolerance for instability. A normalization of unemployment, flexibility, a tolerance for instability and low expectations for the world of work—both in terms of work conditions and the capacity for work to provide a social identity—and no longer having the organization of work as a central structure of organization in one's life, are all qualities and conditions associated with neoliberalism and in the formation of neoliberal subjectivities. Yet, I do not posit these to be neoliberal subjectivities which came to shape my way of seeing the world but rather post-Fordist subjectivities emanating from the experiences and impacts of deindustrialization and accompanying relations to capital in a particular place at a particular time. Yet, at the same time such post-Fordist subjectivities come to align with neoliberal aims and neoliberal images of what constitutes an ideal workforce. A central idea that I have put forth is that neoliberal subjectivities can easily

be superimposed on Fordist and post-Fordist subjectivities with the experiences of post-Fordism coming to condition one to accept or adapt to neoliberal tenets.

Meanwhile, the interconnections in which I was involved, although I didn't recognise it at the time, were exceptionally global. A Swedish-based multinational pulp and paper corporation by creating Port Hawkesbury as a space of capital, German tourists in looking for bucolic settings in affordable parts of the world, the fallibility of the tankers used for trans-Atlantic oil transport requiring the creation of a fleet of oil skimmers, and the demand of Asian markets for seafood, all drew me into particular economic relations and created the conditions which played a fundamental role in structuring life within this particular region and in forming my own particular ways of seeing the world and in perceiving my self-hood. Subjectivities emerge from the immediate context. But such contexts are interwoven into a broader socio/economic/historic fabric.

It has been over a decade since I left the crab factory and the world of work in Cape Breton and nearly a decade since the Japanese conglomerate closed the factory permanently and put a few hundred workers from the factory floor and from the crab fishing boats out of work and nearly a decade since many of the same people I once worked with began to go out to Fort McMurray to work in the Oil Sands. Some have gone because of the potential for interesting and rewarding well-remunerated work, many others because it is the only option they think they have. And in the over ten years since I left the crab plant, I've slowly become introduced to theoretical concepts of class and many other concepts that were not discussed on the factory floor or in the engine room of

the oil skimmer. And I have attempted to deal with the idea of classed subjectivity as a concept which posits that the way we come to see and understand the world and the way we come to see and understand our selves as a function of our particular relations to production, our particular relations to the world of work and our particular position within economic contexts.

Classed subjectivity, and subjectivity more broadly speaking, can come to condition one's worldview and understanding of self (Knights and Willmott 1989) yet I wish to remain wary in regards to overestimating its overarching ability to shape the totality of one's self and experiences. I do not accept that subjectivity necessarily nor automatically predetermines views and understandings. At some level individuals retain a capacity of recognition and interpretation that goes beyond what subjectivities come to be applied to them by circumstance. In this instance, I am reminded of Raymond Williams' (1980) discussion on the use and misuse of "determination" in social sciences. As he elaborates, determination in the English language has been contaminated by Protestant ideas of predestination and becomes misunderstood as the utter absence of agency. The term in the social scientific context derives from Germanic thought which more broadly refers to the establishment of pre-conditions or the boundaries within which an individual comes to operate. Marx's own propositions, Williams argues, is about putting determination in men's own activities, that determination ought to be seen instead as "setting limits, exerting pressures" (1980: 32). In this sense such determining factors refers more to the limits of possibility rather than the intrinsic shaping and orientation of one's self toward a specific future and it is elements of this reading that I attempt to retain

in discussions of subjectivity. Suffice to say that if various subjectivities were easily applied to individuals without resistance, contestation or modification, the world in which we live would, I believe, be quite different and most likely far less complex.

Through the 2000s, I returned to Cape Breton Island for vacations and holidays, usually for a brief week or so during summer or winter. Over the course of the decade I would visit various members of my high school cohort who had stayed behind. In the late 1990s many had taken training in the trades in anticipation of the Sable natural gas processing facility but by 2000, it became clear that the promised natural gas facility would not be constructed (a scaled-down version of the project in the form of a fractionation plant did come to be constructed, hardly fulfilling expectations for the anticipated "industrial renaissance"). A generation was trained to be pipe-fitters, scaffolders and welders for work that simply did not exist locally. In the early 2000s, the call-centre phenomena emerged in Cape Breton as various levels of government put policies into place would encouraged call centres to establish centres through Atlantic Canada in an attempt to counter the impacts of deindustrialization in the region (Gibbs and Leech 2009). Port Hawkesbury came to be the site of one such centre as did Sydney and the Northside in Industrial Cape Breton on the eastern side of the island. Many people I knew who had planned and trained for industrial careers found themselves in this low-paid sector of the so-called knowledge economy.

I had heard about Fort McMurray in the mid-1990s and vaguely knew of a few relatives who had gone to work in the oil fields of Northern Alberta but the concept of working in the Oil Sands in Cape Breton was not yet common in this period. It was

during a brief summer visit home in 2003 that I began to realize the extent to which the Oil Sands had become connected to Cape Breton through the mobility of labour. None of my old high school friends who had previously been working at the local call centre were home to socialize; their families simply informed me that they were working "out West". I eventually ran into some old high school friends who excitedly explained that they had just come back from working their first contract as scaffolders in Fort McMurray and described the imposing and terrifyingly exciting mega-projects of the Sands as though they had returned from an alien landscape: massive factories spread across acres of land, labyrinths of pipelines of dizzying proportions, pits dug into the ground deeper and wider than any quarry or strip-mine ever seen, air thick with the smells of pitch and sulphur and behemoth dump-trucks bigger than houses that shook the ground as they drove past. The boom was beginning and there seemed to be no end in sight and Cape Breton was quickly becoming tied to new economic processes and new forms of industrialization.

Capital creates its own spaces and individual subjectivities come to be formed in relation to these organizations of work. Labour migration at its base is about securing a livelihood and economically supporting oneself and perhaps one's family (Basok 2003). But labour migration is also motivated in certain circumstances by attempts to realize forms of life which are no longer readily available with many coming to see that work out in the Oil Sands while being a form of work "away", still allows for the continuation of certain work-based identities at "home". Work is, by its nature, classed and classifying phenomena and labour migration, in the same regards, is a fundamentally classed phenomenon (Barber and Lem 2010).

Meanwhile, in the period that I was finishing the writing of this dissertation, three events came to head. Xstatra officially cancelled its involvement in re-establishing a coal-mine in Donkin; the Sydney harbour dredging did take place, but no private industry has yet stepped in to build a shipping container port. A bit closer to home, the pulp mill of Port Hawkesbury, after switching corporate owners several times and after several decades of instability, finally closed its doors. Several hundred people in the Strait area lost their jobs and livelihoods, bringing to a close this particular social experiment which gave rise to industrial work in south-western Cape Breton. And as such, several hundred workers—many close friends and relatives who have created lives and families and established roots in the Strait Region—now find themselves preparing for work in the Oil Sands and beginning a chapter of industrial work organization markedly different from the one that led to my father proudly hanging a certificate on the living room wall celebrating his twenty-five years of injury-free employment.

References

Abrahamer Rothstein, Frances and Michael Blim
1991 Anthropology and the Global Factory. New York and London: Bergin and Garvey.

Action Canada
2007 Moving in the Right Direction? Labour Mobility, Labour Shortage and Canada's Human Potential. June 2007.

Afsar, Rita
2003 "Internal Migration and the Development Nexus: The Case of Bangladesh". Presented at the Regional Conference on Migration, Development and Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia, June 22-24.

Ahmed, Sara, Claudia Castañeda, Anne-Marie Fortier Fortier and Mimi Sheller
2003 Introduction. *In* Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration. Oxford: Berg.

Alberta Municipal Affairs
1980 Fort McMurray: Putting Planning into Context. Alberta Municipal Affairs Planning Services Division.

Alberta Chamber of Resources
1995 The Oil Sands: A New Energy Vision for Canada.

Alberta Economic Development
2004 Oil Sands Industry Update.

Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (EUB)
2004 Alberta's Reserves 2003 and Supply/Demand Outlook 2004-2013.

Albo, Gregory
2010 The "New Economy" and Capitalism Today. *In* Interrogating the New Economy: Restructuring Work in the 21st Century. Norene Pupo and Mark P. Thomas, eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Albrow, Martin
1996 The Global Age: State and Society Beyond Modernity. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Amin, Mohammad and Aaditya Mattoo
2005 Does Temporary Migration have to be Permanent? World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 3582.

Amit, Vered
2002 An Anthropology without Community? *In* The Trouble with Community: Anthropological Reflections on Movement, Identity and Collectivity. Vered Amit, Nigel Rapport, eds. London: Pluto Press.

Amit, Vered
2002 The Moving 'Expert': A Study of Mobile Professionals in the Cayman Islands and North America. *In* Work and Migration: Life and Livelihood in a Globalizing World. Karen Fog Olwig and Ninna Sorensen, eds. London: Routledge.

Amit, Vered
2002 Reconceptualizing Community. *In* Realizing Community: Concepts, Social Relationships and Sentiments. Vered Amit, ed. New York: Routledge.

Anderson, Benedict
1991 Imagined Communities. New York: Verso.

Appadurai, Arjun
1996 Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Appadurai, Arjun
1993 The Heart of Whiteness. Callaloo 16(4):796-807.

Arango, Joanquin
1998 Contemporary Theories of International Migration. *In* Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium. D. Massey, et al., eds. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Arnold, Dennis and John Pickles
2011 Global Work, Surplus Labor and the Precarious Economies of the Border. Antipode 43(5):1598-1624.

Asad, Talal
1994 Ethnographic Representation, Statistics and Modern Power. Social Research 61(1):55-88.

Ayers, Tom
2010 Donkin Coal Project could Go Ahead Or be Cancelled. Cape Breton Post A1(February 9).

Aylward, Mary
2007 Shadow Populations in Northern Alberta. Report Prepared for Northern Alberta Development Council.

Ballard, Chris and Glenn Banks
2003 Resource Wars: The Anthropology of Mining. Annual Review of Anthropology 32(1):287-313.

Barber, Pauline
1992 Working through the Crisis: Resistance and Resignation in the Culture of a Deindustrialized Community" Workers' Expressions: Beyond Accommodation and Resistance John Calagione, Doris Francis and Daniel Nugent, eds. New York: State University of New York Press.

Barber, Pauline
1990 Resignation and Resistance: The Cultural Context of Fish Processing Work in Glace Bary, Nova Scotia. Unpublished Dissertation, University of Toronto.

Barber, Pauline
2002 The 'Culture of Making do': Gender, Work and Family in Cape Breton Working Class Life. *In* Voices: Essays on Canadian Families. M. Lynn, ed. Toronto: Nelson Canada.

Barber, Pauline
2002 Militant Particularism and Cultural Struggles as Cape Breton Burns again. *In* Culture, Economy, Power: Anthropology as Critique, Anthropology as Praxis. Belinda Leach and Winnie Lem, eds. Pp. 206-220. Albany: SUNY Press.

Barber, Pauline
2004 Contridications of Class and Consumption when the Commodity is Labour. Anthropologica 46(2):203-218.

Barber, Pauline and Winnie Lem
2008 Migrants, Mobility and Mobilization. Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology(51):3-12.

Basch, Linda G.
1994 Nations Unbound : Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States. :[vi], 344 p.

Basok, Tanya
2002 Tortillas and Tomatoes: Transmigrant Mexican Harvesters in Canada Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.

Bauder, Harald
2006 Labor Migration: How Migration Regulates Labor Markets. New York: Oxford University Press.

Beck, Ulrich
1992 Risk Society : Towards a New Modernity. London: Sage Publications.

Behar, Ruth
Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story. Boston: Beacon.

Benwell, Bethan and Elizabeth Stokoe
2006 Discourse and Identity. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Bernal, Victoria
2004 Eritrea Goes Global: Reflections on Nationalism in a Transnational Era. Cultural Anthropology 19(1):3-25.

Beynon, H. and R. Hudson
1993 Place and Space in Contemporary Europe: Some Lessons and Reflections. Antipode 25(3):177-190.

Binford, Leigh
2003 "Migrant Remittances and (Under)Development in Mexico". Critique of Anthropology 23(3):305-336.

Blackman, M.
1991 The Individual and Beyond: Reflections of the Life History Process. Anthropology and the Humanism 16(2):56-62.

Blim, Michael
1991 Introduction: The Emerging Global Factory and Anthropology" in Abrahamer Rothstein, Frances and Michael Blim, Eds. Anthropology and the Global Factory. Michael Blim, Abrahamer Rosthstein, eds. New York: Bergin and Garvey.

Blim, Michael
2000 Capitalisms in Late Modernity. Annual Review of Anthropology 29(1):25-38.

Bradwin, Edmund William
1972 The Bunkhouse Man : A Study of Work and Pay in the Camps of Canada, 1903-1914. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Brandie, G. W., R. H. Clark and J. C. Wiginton
1982 The Economic Enigma of the Tar Sands. Canadian Public Policy/Analyse De Politiques 8(2):156-164.

Braverman, Harry
1974 Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century. New York and London: Monthly Review Press.

Brettell, Caroline
2003 Anthropology and Migration: Essays on Transnationalism, Ethnicity and Identity. California: Altamira Press.

Brettell, Caroline
2007 Adjustment of Status, Remittances and Return: Some Observations on 21st Century Migration Processes. City & Society 19(1):47-59.

Brettell, Caroline and James Hollifield
2000 Introduction. *In* Migration Theory. Talking Accross Discipline. Caroline Brettell and James Hollifield, eds. Pp. 1-26. New York: Routledge.

Broad, Dave and Garson Hunter
2010 Work, Welfare and the New Economy: The Commodification of Everything. *In* Interrogating the New Economy : Restructuring Work in the 21st Century. Norene Pupo and Mark P. Thomas, eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Burawoy, Michael
1976 The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labor: Comparative Material from Southern Africa and the United States. The American Journal of Sociology 81(5):1050-1087.

Burawoy, Michael
1979 Manufacturing Consent. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Burawoy, Michael
1985 The Politics of Production. London: Verso.

Business Day
2011 Indigenous Rights Group Turns Up the Heat on Canada. (December 7).

Calagione, John and Daniel Nugent
1992 Workers' Expressions: Beyond Accommodation and Resistance on the Margins of Capitalism" Workers' Expressions: Beyond Accommodation and Resistance. John Calagione, Doris Francis and Daniel Nugent, eds. New York: State University of New York Press.

Cameron, Donal
1999 Last Call for Cape Breton Coal. Canadian Geographic (December 1999:32).

Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
2004 Canadian Crude Oil Production and Supply Forecast 2004-2015.

Canadian Energy Research Institute (CERI)
2004 Oil Sands Supply Outlook: Potential Supply and Costs of Crude Bitumen and Synthetic Crude Oil in Canada 2003-2017.

Canadian Labour Congress
2009 EI is Broken - it's Time to Fix it! (April 28)
http://www.canadianlabour.ca/national/news/eiisbrokenitstimetogixit Accessed July 7 2012.

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation
2011 Average House Price Market Report 2011.

Cape Breton Post
2010a Donkin Coal Mine could Go Ahead Or be Cancelled. February 9:A1.

Cape Breton Post
2010b And Wait. February 11:A6.

Cape Breton Post
2010c Approve Dredging or Graduating Class should Start Packing. Letters to the Editor. May 10: B8.

Cape Breton Post
2010d Dredging can start a New Story. May 5: B7.

Cape Breton Post
2006 Eastern Workers Subsidize Alberta. September 30: A5.

Cape Breton Post
2004a Report Underlines Falling Population Numbers. February 10:A8.

Cape Breton Post
2004b Stating the Obvious. September 30: A4.

Cape Breton Post
2004c Don't Go Away but Don't Come Back. March 22:C2.

Cape Breton Post
2004d Figures show Steep Decline: A New Set of Population Projections Jolts Debate Over Island's Future. February 10: A8

Cape Breton Post
2004e View from the Highlands. July 15:A4.

Cape Breton Post
2001 People of all Ages on their Way Off the Island. March 10:B3.

Cape Breton Regional Municipality
July 2009 Sustainability Report: "Integrated Community Sustainability Plan" .

Cape Breton Regional Municipality
2009 Population Projections for Cape Breton Regional Municipality – 2006-2021.

Carrigy, Maurice
1986 New Production Techniques for Alberta Oil Sands. Science, New Series 234(4783):1515-1518.

Carroll, Joe
2007 Roughnecks Get Maids as Shell, Exxon Battle Oil Worker Shortage. Bloomberg Businessweek February 22 http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aiSAexDTqf5I&refer=home Accessed January 8 2010.

Castles, Stephen and Mark J. Miller
1998 The Age of Migration : International Population Movements in the Modern World. 2nd ed. ed. New York: Guilford Press.

CBC News
2006 Alberta Oil Boom Pumps $3 M a Week into Cape Breton. March 7 http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2006/03/07/oil-boom060307.html. Accessed May 15 2011.

CBC News
2007 Calgaria Sufferers no Longer Delusional. CBC News. March 30:http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/story/2007/03/30/delusional-calgaria.html Accessed May 8 2011.

CBC News
2011 Alberta Oil Boom Pumps $3 M a Week into Cape Breton. March 7. Http://www.Cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2006/03/07/oil-boom060307.Html. Accessed May 15 2011.

CBC News
2012 Seasonal Workers may have Hard Time Finding Winter Work. CBC

News(June 5):http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2012/06/05/pei-employers-reaction-seasonal.html?cmp=rss Accessed July 5 2012.

CBCEDA
2007 Year in Review Report. Cape Breton County Economic Development Authority.

CBRM
2009 Cape Breton Regional Municipality Draft Integrated Sustainability Report.

Chambers, Ian
1994 Migrancy Culture Identity. London: Routledge.

Chant, Syliva and Matthew Guttman
2005 "'Men-Streaming" Gender? Questions for Gender and Development in the Twenty-First Century". *In* The Anthropology of Development and Globalization. Marc Edelman and Angelique Haugerud, eds. Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Chastko, Paul A.
2004 Developing Alberta's Oil Sands : From Karl Clark to Kyoto. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.

Chavez, Leo
1988 Settlers and Sojourners: The Case of Mexicans in the United States. Human Organization 47:95-107.

Clifford, James
1992 Travelling Cultures. *In* Cultural Studies. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler, eds. New York: Routledge.

Clifford, James and George E. Marcus
1986 Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cohen, Andrew
1985 The Symbolic Construction of Community. London: Routledge.

Cohen, Robin
1996 Diasporas and the Nation-State: From Victims to Challengers. Royal Institute of International Affairs 72(3):507-520.

Cohen, Robin
2006 Migration and its Enemies: Global Capital, Migrant Labour and the Nation-State.

Cohen, Jeffrey H.
2001 "Transnational Migration in Rural Oaxaca, Mexico: Dependency, Development and the Household". American Anthropologist 103(4):954-967.

Cohen, Jeffrey H.
2001 Transnational Migration in Rural Oaxaca, Mexico: Dependency, Development and the Household. American Anthropologist 103(4):954-967.

Collins, Jane L.
2002 Deterritorialization and Workplace Culture. American Ethnologist 29(1):151-171.

Comaroff, Jean and John L. Comaroff
1987 The Madman and the Migrant: Work and Labor in the Historical Consciousness of a South African People. American Ethnologist 14(2):191-209.

Comaroff, Jean and John L. Comaroff
1991 Of Revelation and Revolution. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Corbett, Michael
2007a All Kinds of Potential: Women and Out-Migration in an Atlantic Canadian Coastal Community. Journal of Rural Studies 23:430-442.

Corbett, Michael
2007b Learning to Leave: The Irony of Schooling in a Coastal Community. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Crapanzano, Vincent
Life Histories: A Review Essay. American Anthropologist 26:953-960.

Crehan, Kate
2002 Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cuba, Lee and David M. Hummon
1993 Constructing a Sense of Home: Place Affiliation and Migration Across the Life Cycle. Sociological Forum 8(4):547-572.

Cuneo, Carl
1979 State, Class and Reserve Labour: The Case of the 1941 Canadian

Unemployment Insurance Act. Canadian Review of Anthropology and Sociology(16):147-170.

Curry, Bill
2012 Employment Insurance: As Provinces Balk at EI Changes, Flaherty Says Let's Talk. Globe and Mail. May 25:http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/as-provinces-balk-at-ei-changes-flaherty-says-lets-talk/article4217823 Accessed July 5 2012.

Dagenais, Daniel
2008 The (Un)Making of the Modern Family. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Davis, Jerome
2005 North America Oil and Natural Gas: Current Trends, Future Problems? International Journal 60(2):429-436.

de Guerre, Katherine
2009 Temporary Foreign Workers in Alberta's Oil Sector. University of Sussex Centre for Migration Research(Working Paper #54).

Dean, Bennet
2007 Fort Mac Braces for More Newcomers: Nova Scotians have Helped Double its Population in a Decade. Chronicle Herald B2(December 5 2007).

Dennis, Norman, Fernando Henriques and Cliff Slaughter
1956 Coal is our Life : An Analysis of a Yorkshire Mining Community. London and New York: Travistoick Publications.

deRoche, Constance and John deRoche
1987 Introduction. *In* Rock in a Stream: Living with the Political Economy of Underdevelopment in Cape Breton. St. Johns: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Research and Policy Papers.

deRoche, Constance
1987 Workworlds and Worldviews: An Interpretation of Socioeconomic Strategies among Cape Breton Acadians. *In* Rock in a Stream: Living with the Political Economy of Underdevelopment in Cape Breton. St. Johns: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Research and Policy Papers.

deRoche, Constance
2002 Culture of Poverty Lives on: Community Economic Developers in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. City & Society 15(2):225-254.

deRoche, Constance
2005 Business First: Work Relations in Cape Breton's "Progressive" Third Sector. Anthropology of Work Review 26(1):20.

Deutsch, F.
2002 Halving it all: The Mother and Mr. Mom. *In* Families at Work: Expanding the Bounds. D. Clawson, N. Gerstel and R. Zussman, eds. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

di Leonardo, Micaela
1991 Introduction: Gender, Culture and Political Economy. *In* Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Donald, James Richardson,
1966 The Cape Breton Coal Problem. National Energy Board. Ottawa: Queen's Printer.

Douglas, Mary
1991 The Idea of Home: A Kind of Place. Social Research 58(1):281-307.

Dunk, Thomas
1991 It's a Working Man's Town: Male Working-Class Culture. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Dunk, Thomas
2002 Remaking the Working Class: Experience, Class Consciousness and the Industrial Adjustment Process. American Ethnologist 29(4):878-900.

Dunk, Thomas and David Bartol
2005 The Logic and Limitation of Male Working-Class Culture in a Resource Hinterland. *In* Spaces of Masculinities. B. van Hoven and K. Hörschelman, eds. London and New York: Routledge.

Dupuis, Joseph
1976 Life is Pretty Good at the Syncrude Camp. The Leader-Post, February 9: B12.

Dupuis, Joseph
1976 No Feeling of Remotness at Alberta Syncrude Camp. Montreal Gazette, February 7 A8.

Dupuis, Joseph
1976 Syncrude Project: Good Pay, Single Room with Maid. Windsor Star, February 9 B2.

Dyck, Noel
2002 'Have You been to Hayward Field?' Children's Sport and the Construction of Community in Suburban Canada. *In* Realizing Community: Concepts, Social Relationships and Sentiments Vered Amit, ed. London: Routledge.

Eades, Jerry
1987 Migrants, Workers and the Social Order. London: Tavistock.

Edelman, Marc and Angelique Haugerud
2005 "Introduction: The Anthropology of Development and Globalization". *In* The Anthropology of Development and Globalization. Marc Edelman and Angelique Haugerud, eds. Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

EIA
2012 Annual Coal Report. Washington: US Energy Information Administration.

Engler, Robert
1967 The Politics of Oil : A Study of Private Power and Democratic Directions. Chicago: University of Chicago

Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation
2009 Demographic Research Study. Sydney: ECBC.

Erskine, Bruce
2009 Syncrude Recruiter in Town: Skilled Trades, Operations Personnel Needed. Chronicle Herald. February 3: C3.

Ervin, Alexander M. and Lorne Holyoak
2006 "Applied Anthropology in Canada: Historical Foundations, Contemporary Practice and Policy Potentials". National Association for the Practice of Anthropology Bulletin 25(1):134-155.

Escobar, Arturo
1995 Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Escobar, A.
2001 Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization, Political Geography 20:139-174.

Escobar, Arturo
2002 The Problematization of Poverty: The Tale of Three Worlds and Development. *In* Development: A Cultural Studies Reader. Susanne Schech and Jane Haggis, eds. Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Ezzy, Douglas
1997 Subjectivity and the Labour Process: Conceptualizing 'Good Work'. Sociology 31(3):427-444.

Fairbrother, Peter and Waddintong, Jeremy
1990 The Politics of Trade Unionism: Evidence, Policy and Theory. Capital & Class(14):15-56.

Fekete, Jason
2012 Sweeping EI Crackdown to Target Repeat Benefit Claimants. National Post(May 24):http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/05/24/new-ei-rules-make-the-program-less-beneficial-the-more-regularly-you-use-it-government Accessed July 5th 2012.

Feltault, Kelly
2005 We're our Own Boss: Gendered Class-Consciousness and White Privilege among Hooper's Island Crab Pickers. Anthropology of Work Review 26(1):1-13.

Ferguson, James
1999 Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt. Berkley: University of California Press.

Ferguson, James
2002 The Constitution of the Object of "Development": Lesotho as a "Less Developed Country". *In* Development: A Cultural Studies Reader. Susanne Schech and Jane Haggis, eds. Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Ferguson, James
2005 Anthropology and its Evil Twin: "Development" in the Constitution of a Discipline. *In* The Anthropology of Development and Globalization. Marc Edelman and Angelique Haugerud, eds. Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Ferguson, Nelson
2007 The Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Program: Considerations for the Future of Farming and the Implications of Managed Migration. Our Diverse Cities 3(1):189-193.

Ferguson, Nelson
2010 Conversations with Eulogio: Migration and the Building of a Life-Project in Motion. *In* Human Nature, Human Capacity: Transending Discourse and Classification. Nigel Rapport, ed. Pp. 31-53. New York: Bergham Books.

Ferguson, Nelson
2011 From Coal Pits to Tar Sands: Labour Migration between an Atlantic Canadian

Region and the Athabasca Oil Sands. Just Labour: Canadian Journal of Work and Society 17:106-118.

Fielding, Anthony
2006 Migration and Social Mobility: South East England as an Escalator Region. Regional Studies 26(1):1-15.

Foote, Raymond
1979 The Case of Port Hawkesbury: Rapid Industrialization and Social Unrest in a Nova Scotia Community. Toronto: PMA Books.

Fortier, A-M
2003 Making Home: Queer Migrations and Motions of Attachment. *In* Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration S. Amed, C. Castaneda, A. M. Fortier and M. Sheller, eds. New York: Berg.

Foucault, Michel
1991 Governmentality. *In* The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller,eds. Pp. 87–104. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, Michel
1982 Technologies of the Self. *In* Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton, eds.Pp. 16–49. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Foucault, Michel
1995 [1975] Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison. London: Vintage.

Frank, David
1999 J.B. McLachlan : A Biography. Toronto: James Lorimer Press.

Freeman, Carla
2007 The Reputation of Neoliberalism. American Ethnologist 34(2):252-267.

Freese, Barbara
2003 Coal: A Human History. Cambridge: Perseus Publishing

Frickel, Scott and William Freudenburg
1996 Mining the Past: Historical Context and the Changing Implications of Natural Resource Extraction. Social Problems 43(4):444-466.

Gedalof, I.
2003 Taking (a) Place: Female Embodiment and the Regrounding of Community. *In* Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration S. Amed, C. Castaneda, A. M. Fortier and M. Sheller, eds. New York: Berg.

Genova, Nicholas P.
2002 Migrant "Illegality" and Deportability in Everyday Life. Annual Review of Anthropology 31:419-447.

George, Sheba Mariam
2005 When Women Come First: Gender and Class in Transnational Migration. California: University of California Press.

Gershon, Ilana
2011 Neoliberal Agency. Current Anthropology 52(4):537-555.

Gibbs, T. and G. Leech
2009 The Failure of Global Capitalism: From Cape Breton to Colombia and Beyond. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.

Glick Schiller, N. and G. Fouron
2001 Georges Woke Up Laughing. Long Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home. London: Duke University Press.

Glick Schiller, Nina, Linda G. Basch and Cristina Blanc
1995 From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration. Anthropological Quarterly 68(1):48-63.

Gluckman, Max
1961 Anthropological Problems Arising from the African Industrial Revolution. *In* Social Change in Modern Africa. A. Southall, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gmelch, George
1980 Return Migration. Annual Review of Anthropology 9:135-159.

Gmelch, George and Bamett Richling
1988 'We're Better Off here': Return Migration to Newfoundland Outports. Anthropology Today 4(4):12-14.

Goldman, David
2008 Oil Crosses $110 Despite Supply Rise. CNN Money. March 12 http://money.cnn.com/2008/03/12/markets/oil_eia/index.htm, accessed July 8 2011.

Gordillo, Gaston
2002 Locations of Hegemony: The Making of Places in the Toba's Struggle for La Communa, 1989-99. American Anthropologist 104(1):262-277.

Government of Alberta
2012 Alberta Energy. Electronic document, http://www.energy.alberta.ca/oilsands/791.asp, accessed July 12, 2012.

Government of Canada
2011 Labour Force Survey. Government of Canada, Statistics Canada.

Gramsci, Antonio
1992 Prison Notebooks. New York: International Publishers

Gray, John
2002 Community as Place-Making: Ram Auctions in the Scottish Borderland. *In* Realizing Community: Concepts, Social Relationships and Sentiments Vered Amit, ed. London: Routledge.

Gupta, Akhil
1996 The Song of the Nonaligned World: Transnational Identities and the Reinscription of Space in Late Capitalism. *In* Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, eds. London: Duke University.

Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson
1997 Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity and the Politics of Difference. *In* Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, eds. London: Duke University.

Gutmann, Matthew C.
1997 Trafficking in Men: The Anthropology of Masculinity. Annual Review of Anthropology 26(1):385-409.

Hage, Ghassan
2005 A Not so Multi-Sited Ethnography of a Not so Imagined Community. Anthropological Theory 5(4):463-475.

Haines, David
2007 Labor, Migration and Anthropology: Reflections from the Work of Philip L. Martin. City & Society 19(1):60-71.

Hall, Stuart
1996 The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power. *In* Modernity: An Introduction to

Modern Societies. S. Hall, D. Held, D. Hubert and K. Thompson, eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Hall, Stuart
1987 Minimal Selves. *In* Identity the Real Me. Homi Bhabha and Lisa Appignanesi, eds. Pp. 44-46. Boston: Institute of Contemporary Arts.

Halseth, Greg
2002 Building Community in an Instant Town: A Social Geography of Mackenzie and Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia. Prince George: UNBC.

Hamann, Edmund
2007 "But Sometimes Labor Migration is about More than Labor Migration: Complementary Perspectives of an Educational Anthropologist". City & Society 19(1):36-46.

Hammes, David and Douglas Wills
2005 Black Gold: The End of Bretton Woods and the Oil-Price Shocks of the 1970s. The Independent Review 9(4):501-511.

Hartman, Yvonne
2005 In Bed with the Enemy: Some Ideas on the Connections between Neoliberalism and the Welfare State. Current Sociology 53(1):57-73.

Harvey, David
2006 Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards A Theory of Uneven Geographical Development. London: Verso.

Harvey, David
2010 The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harvey, David
2005 A Brief History of Neoliberalism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harvey, David
2001 Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press.

Harvey, David
1989 The Condition of Postmodernity : An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell.

Hastrup, K. and K. Olwig
1997 Introduction. *In* Siting Culture: The Shifting Anthropological Object. Hastrup and Olwig, eds. London: Routledge.

Hayes, Chris
2007a CBU Officials Heading to Alberta in Search of Students: Online Distance Education may be of Interest to Displaced Cape Bretoners. Cape Breton Post February 17:A2.

Hayes, Chris
2007b Capers Get Air Support from Oil Company. Cape Breton Post. February 2:A1.

Heinz, Walter
2006 From Work Trajectories to Negotiated Careers. the Contingent Work Life Course. *In* Handbook of the Life Course. Jeylan Mortimer and Michael Shanahan, eds. New York: Springer.

Helliwell, John and Robert McRae
1982 Resolving the Energy Conflict: From the National Energy Program to the Energy Agreements. Canadian Public Policy/Analyse De Politiques 8(1):14-23.

Helliwell, John and Robert McRae
1981 The National Energy Conflict. Canadian Public Policy/Analyse De Politiques 7(1):15-23.

Higgins, Rylan
2005 Bodies for Rent: Labor and Marginality in Southern Louisiana. Anthropology of Work Review 26(3):12-22.

Holzberg, C. S. and M. J. Giovannini
1981 Anthropology and Industry: Reappraisal and New Directions. Annual Review of Anthropology 10(1):317-360.

Hornsby, Stephen
1989 Staple Trades, Subsistence Agriculture and Nineteenth-Century Cape Breton Island. Annals of the Association of American Geographers 79(3):411-434.

Huws, Ursula and Simone Dalhmann
2010 Global Restructuring of Value Chains and Class Issues. *In* Interrogating the New Economy : Restructuring Work in the 21st Century. Norene Pupo and Mark P. Thomas, eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Hvidt, Kristian
1975 Flight to America: The Social Background of 300,000 Danish Emigrants. New York: Academic Press.

Ignatieff, Michael
2009 Make EI Work. National Post. May 23 2009. http://www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=1622189 Accessed July 5 2012.

Innis, Harold Adams,
1970 The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Jenkins, Barbara
1986 Re-examining the "Obsolescing Bargain": A Study of Canada's National Energy Program. International Organization 40(1):139-165.

Joseph, Miranda
2002 Against the Romance of Community. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Jourdan, Christine
1997 Resina`s Life Histories. Canberra Anthropology 20(1-2):40-54.

Kalb, Don
Expanding Class: Power and Everyday Politics in Industrial Communities, the Netherlands, 1850-1950.

Kandel, William and Douglas Massey
2002 The Culture of Mexican Migration: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis. Social Forces 80(3):981-1004.

Kearney, Michael
1986 From the Invisible Hand to Visible Feet: Anthropological Studies of Migration and Development. Annual Review of Anthropology 15:331-361.

Kendall, David
2012 Always Let the Road Decide: South Asian Labourers Along the Highways of Dubai, UAE: A Photographic Essay. South Asian Diaspora 4(1):45-55.

Khosravi, Shahram
2010 'Illegal' Traveller: An Auto-Ethnography of Borders. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kindleberger, Charles Poor
1967 Europe's Postwar Growth : The Role of Labor Supply. Cambridge: Massachusetts.

King, Russell
1986 Return Migration and Regional Economic Problems. London: C. Helm.

King, Russell, A. J. Strachan and Mortimer Jill
1983 Return Migration, a Review of the Literature. Oxford: Oxford Polytechnic.

Knights, David and Hugh Willmott
1989 Power and Subjectivity at Work: From Degradation to Subjugation in Social Relations. Sociology 23(4):535-558.

Krahn, H., Graham Lowe and K. Hughes
2006 Work, Industry and Canadian Society. Toronto: Nelson.

Lamphere, Louise, Patricia Zavella and Felipe Gonzales
1993 Sunbelt Working Mothers: Reconciling Family and Factory. Cornwall: Cornwall University Press.

Larisey, Peter
1993 Light for a Cold Land: Lawren Harris's Work and Life. Toronto: Dundurn.

Laslett, John H. M.
1996 The United Mine Workers of America: A Model of Industrial Solidarity? Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Lave, Jean, Paul Duguid, Nadine Fernandez and Erik Axel
1992 Coming of Age in Birmingham: Cultural Studies and Conceptions of Subjectivity. Annual Review of Anthropology 21(1):257-282.

Le Riche, Timothy
2006 Alberta`s Oil Patch: The People, Politics and Companies. Edmonton: Folklore Publishing.

Lem, Winnie and Pauline Gardiner Barber
2010 Introduction. *In* Class, Contention and a World in Motion. Winnie Lem and Pauline Gardner Barber, eds. Pp. 1-20. New York: Berghahn Books.

Lem, Winnie
2002 Articulating Class in Post-Fordist France. American Ethnologist 29(2):287-306.

Levant, Ezra
2010 Ethical Oil. The Case for Canada`s Oil Sands. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

Levitt, Peggy and Nina Glick Schiller
2008 Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society. *In* Rethinking Migration : New Theoretical and Emperical Perspectives. Alejandro Portes and Josh DeWind, eds. New York: Berghahn Books.

Ligaya, Armina
2012 'When I needed it, I used it": Green Party Leader Elizabeth may says she was a repeat EI user. National Post. May 24. http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/05/24/when-i-needed-it-i-used-it-green-party-leader-elizabeth-may-says-she-was-repeat-ei-user/ Accessed July 5 2012.

Linde, Charlotte
1993 Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence. New York: Oxford.

Lucas, Rex A.
1971 Minetown, Milltown, Railtown; Life in Canadian Communities of Single Industry. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Luxton, Meg
1980 More than a Labour of Love: Three Generations of Women's Work in the Home. Georgtown: Women's Press.

MacKenzie, A. A.
2002 The Harvest Train : When Maritimers Worked in the Canadian West, 1890-1928. Wreck Cove: Breton Books.

Macleod, Greg
1991 New Dawn Enterprises. Sydney: Tompkins Insitute.

MacSween, Rankin
2010 Dredging can start a New Story. Cape Breton Post. May 5:A6.

Marcus, George E.
1995 Ethnography in/of World Systems: The Emergence of Mulit-Sited Ethnography. Annual Review of Anthropology 24:95-117.

Markowitz, Fran
2004 The Home(s) of Homecomings. *In* Homecomings: Unsettling Paths of Return. Fran Markowitz and Anders Stefansson, eds. Maryland: Lexington Books.

Marsden, William
2007 Stupid to the Last Drop: How Alberta is Bringing Environmental Armageddon to Canada (and Doesn`t seem to Care). Toronto: Alfred A Knopf Canada.

Martin, Philip
2007 Response: Labor and Migration in the 21st Century. City & Society 19(1):72-76.

Martin, Philip
2003 Managing Labour Migration: Temporary Worker Programs for the 21St Century. . Geneva: International Institute for Labour Studies.

Martin, Emily
1994 Flexible Bodies : Tracking Immunity in American Culture from the Days of Polio to the Age of AIDS. Boston: Beacon Press.

Marx, Karl
1985 Communist Manifesto. London and New York : Penguin Books.

Masquelier, Adeline
2000 Of Headhunters and Cannibals: Migrancy, Labor and Consumption in the Mawri Imagination. Cultural Anthropology 15(1):84-126.

Massey, D., J. Arango, G. Hugo, A. Kouaouci, A. Pellegrino and J. Taylor
1998 Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Massey, Douglas
1987 Understanding Mexican Migration to the United States. The American Journal of Sociology 92(6):1372-1403.

Maugh II, Thomas H.
1978 Tar Sands: A New Fuels Industry Takes Shape. Science, New Series 199(4330):756-760.

Merrill, Heather
2011 Migration and Surplus Populations: Race and Deindustrialization in Northern Italy. Antipode 43(5):1542-1572.

Mill, Mary Beth
2003 Gender and Inequality in the Global Labor Force. Annual Review of Anthropology 32:41-62.

Mitchell, J. Clyde
1969 Social Networks in Urban Situations: Analyses of Personal Relationships in Central African Towns. J. Clyde Mitchell, ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Mitchell, Timothy
2011 Carbon Democracy : Political Power in the Age of Oil. New York: Verso

Molé, Noelle J.
2010 Precarious Subjects: Anticipating Neoliberalism in Northern Italy's Workplace. American Anthropologist 112(1):38-53.

Mollona, Massimiliano
2005 Factory, Family and Neighbourhood: The Political Economy of Informal Labour in Sheffield. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 11(3):527(22).

Morgan, Robert
2009 Rise again! the Story of Cape Breton Island from 1900 to Today. Vol. 2. Sydney: Breton Books.

Morrison, Marian
2010 Stay-at-Home Capers the Ones Showing Real Courage. Cape Breton Post. January 23:A7.

Mouffe, Chantal
1981 Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci. *In* Culture, Ideology and Social Process. T. Bennett, ed. London: Batsford.

Municipal Census 2010
2010 Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

Municipal Census 2008
2008 Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

Narotsky, Susana
1997 New Directions in Economic Anthropology. London: Pluto Press.

Narotzky, Susana
2010 Gender, History and Political Activism in Spain. *In* Class, Contention and a World in Motion. Winnie Lem and Pauline Gardner Barber, eds. Pp. 125-137. New York: Berghahn Books.

Nash, June
1979 We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us: Dependency and Exploitation in Bolivian Tin Mines . New York: Columbia University Press.

National Energy Board
2004 Canada's Oil Sands: Opportunities and Challenges to 2015. Ottawa: Queen's Printers.

National Energy Board
2007 Canadian Energy Overview. Ottawa: Queen's Printers.

Nelson, Daniel
1995 Managers and Workers: Origins of the Twentieth-Century Factory System in the United States, 1880-1920. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Nı´ Laoire, Caitrı´ona
2007 The 'green Green Grass of Home'? Return Migration to Rural Ireland. Journal of Rural Studies 23:332-344.

Nicols Consulting
2007 Report on Mobile Workers in the Wood Buffalo Region of Alberta. Edmonton: Athabasca Regional Issues Working Group.

Nikiforuk Andrew
2009 Dirty Oil how the Tar Sands are Fueling the Global Climate Crisis. Toronto: Greenpeace Foundation Press.

Nova Scotia
2006 Nova Scotia Labour Market Report, December 2005. Halifax: Nova Scotia Department of Finance.

Ochs, Elinor. and Lisa Capps
1996 Narrating the Self. Annual Review of Anthropology 25:19-43.

O'Connell, Anne
2010 An Exploration of Redneck Whiteness in Multicultural Canada. Social Politics 4(17):536-563.

Oil and Gas Inquirer
2010 Remote Camp Operators Sense Better Times a`coming. October 22:32.

Oil Sands Developers Group
2008 Census of Project Accommodation Populations. Edmonton: Athabasca Regional Issues Working Group.

Olwig, K. and N. Sorensen
2001 Mobile Livelihoods: Making a Living in the World. *In* Work and Migration: Life and Livelihoods in a Globalizing World Karen Fog Olwig and Ninna Sorensen, eds. London: Routledge.

Olwig, Karen Fog
2007 Caribbean Journeys: An Ethnography of Migration and Home in Three Family Networks. New York: Duke University Press.

Olwig, Karen Fog
2002 The Ethnographic Field Revisited: Towards a Study of Common and Not so Common Fields of Belonging. *In* Realizing Community: Concepts, Social Relationships and Sentiments. Vered Amit, ed. London: Routledge.

Olwig, Karen Fog
1999 Narratives of the Children Left Behind: Home and Identity in Globalized Caribbean Families. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 25(2):267-284.

Olwig, Karen Fog
1998 Contested Homes: Home-Making and the Making of Anthropology. *In* Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement. Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson, eds. London: Berg.

Olwig, Karen Fog
1997 Cultural Sites: Sustaining a Home in a Deterritorialized World. *In* Siting Culture: The Shifting Anthropological Object. Karen Fog Olwig and Kirsten Hastrup, eds. New York: Routledge.

Olwig, Karen Fog and Ninna Sorensen
2002 Mobile Livelihoods: Making a Living in the World. *In* Work and Migration: Life and Livelihoods in a Globalizing World. Karen Fog Olwig and Ninna Sorensen, eds. London: Routledge.

O'Neal, C. G.
1999 "Possibilities for Migration Anthropology". American Ethnologist 26(1):221-225.

Ong, Aihwa
2007 Boundary Crossings. Neoliberalism as a Mobile Technology. The Institute of British Geographer 32(3):3-8.

Ong, Aihwa
1987 Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia. New York: State University of New York.

Ong, Aihwa
1991 The Gender and Labor Politics of Postmodernity. Annual Review of Anthropology 20(1):279-309.

Ong, Aihwa
2006 Neoliberalism as Exception : Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Ong, Aihwa
1999 Flexible Citizenship : The Cultural Logics of Transnationality. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Ortiz, Sutti
2002 Laboring in the Factories and Fields. Annual Review of Anthropology 31:395-417.

Ortner, Sherry B.
2002 Subjectivity and Cultural Critique. Anthropological Theory 5(1):31-52.

Orwell, George
1989 Road to Wigan Pier. New York and London: Penguin.

Overbeek, Henk
2002 Neoliberalism and the Regualtion of Global Labor Mobility. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 581:74-90.

Pal, Leslie Alexander,
1988 State, Class and Bureaucracy : Canadian Unemployment Insurance and Public Policy. Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Patterson, Paul and Susan Biagi
2003 The Loom of Change: Weaving a New Economy on Cape Breton Island. Sydney: University College of Cape Breton Press.

Peacock, James L. and Dorothy C. Holland
1993 The Narrated Self: Life Stories in Process. Ethos 21(4):367-383.

Pett, David
June 13 2011 Higher Labour Costs for Oil Sands Projects Expected. Financial Post www.business.financialpost.com/2011/06/13/higher-labour-costs-for-oil-sands-projects-expected Accessed May 17th 2012.

Pocius, Gerald
1991 A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.

Pollert, Anna
1988 Dismantling Flexibility. Capital & Class 3:42-75.

Portney, Paul, Ian Parry, Howard Gruenspecht and Winston Harrington
2003 The Economics of Fuel Economy Standards, Discussion Paper. Resources for the Future.

Pottie, E.
2009 Weekly Chartered Flights between Fort McMurray, Cape Breton about to End. Cape Breton Post. January 14: B3.

Pratt, Larry
1976 The Tar Sands. Syncrude and the Politics of Oil. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers.

Pross, A. Paul
1975 Planning and Development : A Case of Two Nova Scotia Communities. Halifax: Dalhousie University Institute of Public Affairs.

Pun, Ngai
2005 Made in China: Women Factory Workers in a Global Workplace. Durham: Duke University Press.

Pupo, Norene and Mark P. Thomas
2010 Introduction: Work in the New Economy: Critical Reflections. *In* Interrogating the New Economy : Restructuring Work in the 21st Century. Norene Pupo and Mark P. Thomas, eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Rapport, Nigel and Vered Amit
2002 The Trouble with Community: Anthropological Reflections on Movement, Identity and Collectivity. London: Pluto Press.

Rapport, Nigel and Joanna Overing
2000 Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts. London: Routledge.

Rapport, Nigel and Andrew Dawson
1998 Migrants of Identity. Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement. Oxford: Berg.

Read, Jason
2009 A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity. Foucault Studies(6):25-36.

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
2010 Municipal Census 2010.

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
2008 Municipal Census 2008.

Reimer, Bill, Tara Lyons, Nelson Ferguson and Geraldina Polanco
2008 Social Capital as Social Relations: The Contribution of Normative Structures. The Sociological Review 56(2):256-274.

Ritchie, Ronald
1980 Oil Self-Sufficiency for Canada? Canadian Public Policy/Analyse De Politiques 6(3):463-471.

Rofel, Lisa
1999 Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China After Socialism. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Rogers, A. and Vertovec, S.
1995 The Urban Context: Ethnicity, Social Networks and Situational Analysis. Oxford: Berg.

Rose, Euclid
2004 OPEC's Dominance of the Global Oil Market: The Rise of the World's Dependency on Oil. Middle East Journal 58(3):424-443.

Rose, Nikolas, Pat O'Malley and Mariana Valverde
Governmentality. Annual Review of Law and Social Science 2:83-104.

Roseberry, William
1989 Marxism and Culture. *In* Anthropolgies and Histories. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Rothstein, Frances Abrahamer
2010 New Mexican Migrants in a New Age: Globalization, Networks and Gender in Rural Mexico. *In* Class, Contention and a World in Motion. Winnie Lem and Pauline Gardner Barber, eds. Pp. 41-57. New York: Berghahn Books.

Rouse, Roger
2002 "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism". *In* The

Anthropology of Globalization. Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo, eds. Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Rouse, Roger
1991 Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism. Diaspora 1:8-23.

Rouse, Roger
2009. Migration and the Cultural Politics of Class Dynamics. *Paper presented at* Canadian Anthropology Society Annual Conference. Vancouver, BC, May 14 2009.

Russell, B.
1999 More with Less: Work Reorganization in the Canadian Mining Industry. Toronto: Toronto University Press.

Rye, Johan Fredrik
2006 Rural Youths' Images of the Rural. Journal of Rural Studies 22:409-421.

Sarup, Madan
1994 Home and Identity. *In* Travelers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement. George Robertson, ed. London: Routledge.

Sassen, Saskia
1998 Globalization and its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money. New York: New Press.

Schrauwers, Albert
2011 A Genealogy of Corporate Governmentality in the Realm of the 'Merchant-King': The Netherlands Trading Company and the Management of Dutch Paupers. Economy and Society 40(3):373-398.

Scott, James C.
1985 Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance." New Haven: Yale University.

Scott, James C.
1998 Seeing Like a State : How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed. New Haven: Yale University.

Sennett, Richard
1998 The Corrision of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism. New York: W.W. Norten.

Sennett, Richard
2006 The Culture of the New Capitalism. New Haven: Yale University.

Shamir, Ronen
2005 Without Borders? Notes on Globalization as a Mobility Regime. Sociological Theory 23(2):197-217.

Sider, Gerald
2006 The Production of Race, Locality and State: An Anthropology. Anthropologica: The Canadian Journal of Anthropology 48(2):247-263.

Sider, Gerald
2003 Between History and Tomorrow: Making and Breaking Everyday Life in Rural Newfoundland. Peterborough: Broadview Press.

Sider, Gerald
1987 Culture and Class in Anthropology and History: A Newfoundland Illustration. The Journal of American History 73(4):1011-1012.

Sider, Gerald
1980 The Ties that Bind: Culture and Agriculture, Property and Propriety in the Newfoundland Village Fishery. Social History 5(1):1-39.

Simmel, Georg
1971 on Individuality and Social Forms. D. Levine, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Simpson, Bob
1998 Changing Families : An Ethnographic Approach to Divorce and Separation. Berg: Oxford

Sivard, Ruth Leger
1979 World Energy Survey. Leesburg: World Priorities.

Smith, Amy
2007 Does Alberta Want More than our Workers? C.B. Oilsands Labourer Questions Feasibility of Atlantic Trade Mission. Chronicle Herald. January 26 2007:A8.

Smith, Gavin
1999 Confronting the Present: Towards a Politically Engaged Anthropology. Oxford: Berg.

Smith, R. T.
1984 Anthropology and the Concept of Social Class. Annual Review of Anthropology 13(1):467-494.

Standing, Guy
2011 The Precariat : The New Dangerous Class. London:Bloomsbury

Stastny, Paul
2008 Life in Alberta's Teeming Oilsands Camps Highlights the Transient Nature of the Bitumen Brigade. Oilweek Magazine.

Stantec
2010 Cape Breton Regional Municipality Integrated Sustainability Report. Halifax:Stantec

Statistics Canada
2012 Community Profiles. Ottawa: Queen's Printer.

Statistics Canada
2011 Labour Force Survey. Ottawa: Queen's Printer.

Stefansson, Anders
2004 Homecomings to the Future: From Diasporic Mythographies to Social Projects of Return. *In* Homecomings: Unsettling Paths of Return. Fran Markowitz and Anders Stefansson, eds. Maryland: Lexington Books.

Storey, Keith
2009 The Evolution of Commute Work in Canada and Australia." Biography, Shift-Labour and Socialisation in a Northern Industrial City – the Far North: Particularities of Labour and Human Socialisation. Novy Urengoy, Russia December 4-6, 2008.

Storey, Keith
2010 Fly-in/Fly-Out: Implications for Community Sustainability. Sustainability(2):1161-1181.

Storey, Keith., Mark Shrimpton, Jane Lewis and David Clark
1989 Family Life Impacts of Offshore Oil and Gas Employment. Saint Johns: Memorial University Institute of Social and Economic Research.

Striffler, Steve
2007 Neither here nor there: Mexican Immigrant Workers and the Search for Home. American Ethnologist 34(4):674-688.

Sweet, John
2008 Discovery at Prudhoe Bay. Blaine, Washington: Hancock House.

Taussig, Michael
2004 My Cocaine Museum. Chicago: University of Chicago.

Terrain Group
2004 Population Projections for Cape Breton Municipal Units – 2001-2021. Halifax: Terrain

The Economist
2012 Keystone XL Still in the Pipeline. January 18 2012. http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2012/01/keystone-xl. Accessed January 20 2012.

The Economist
2011 Canada`s Oil Industry: The Other Keystone Debate. October 1 2011. http://www.economist.com/blogs/americasview/2011/10/canada per centE2 per cent80 per cent99s-oil-industry. Accessed October 3 2011.

Thomas, Mark P.
2010 Labour Migration and Temporary Work: Canada's Foreign-Worker Programs in the "New Economy". *In* Interrogating the New Economy : Restructuring Work in the 21st Century. Norene Pupo and Mark P. Thomas, eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Thompson, E. P.
1963 The Making of the English Working Class. 1st ed. London: Victor Gollancz.

Tönnies, Ferdinand
1957 Community and Society. New York: Harper.

Trager, Lillian
2005 Introduction: The Dynamics of Migration. *In* Migration and Economy: Global and Local Dynamics. Lillian Trager, ed. Pp. 1-48. Oxford: AltaMira Press.

Tupper, Allan
1978 Public Enterprise as Social Welfare: The Case of the Cape Breton Development Corporation. Canadian Public Policy/Analyse De Politiques 4(4):530-546.

Uhlmann, Allon
2006 Family, Gender and Kinship in Australia : The Social and Cultural Logic of Practice and Subjectivity. Aldershot: Ashgate

Walkerdine, Valerie
2006 Workers in the New Economy: Transformation as Border Crossing. Ethos 34:1 pp. 10-41.

Warsh, David
1982 The Economy: The Oil Glut Deepens; OPEC's Grip Loosens but a Boom Or a Bomb could Spur Prices Back Up. Boston Globe: Febuary 29 1982:B2.

White, Neil
2012 Company Towns : Corporate Order and Community. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Williams, Raymond
1983 Keywords. New York: Oxford University Press.

Willis, Paul
1977 Learning to Labor: Why Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs. New York: Columbia University Press.

Wilson, Tamer Diana
1994 What Determines Where Transnational Labor Migrants Go? Modifications in Migration Theories. Human Organization 53(3):269-278.

Wimmer Andreas and Nina Glick Schiller
2003 "Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology. International Migration Review 37(3):576-610.

Winson, Anthony and Belinda Leach
2002 Contingent Work, Disrupted Lives : Labour and Community in the New Rural Economy. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Wong, Lloyd
2002 Transnationalism, Diasporic Communities and Changing Identity: Implications for Canadian Citizenship Policy. *In* Street Protests and Fantasy Parks: Globalization, Culture and the State. Janice Stein and David Cameron, eds. Pp. 51-89. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

World Bank
2002 "Knowledge for Development". *In* Development: A Cultural Studies Reader. Susanne Schech and Jane Haggis, eds. Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Woynillowicz, Dan and Chris Severson-Baker
2005 Oil Sands Fever - the Environmental Implications of Canada's Oil Sands Rush. Drayton Valley, Alberta: The Pembina Institute for Appropriate Development.

Yeomans, Matthew
2004 Oil : Anatomy of an Industry. New York: New Press.

Yergin, Daniel
2011 The Quest : Energy, Security and the Remaking of the Modern World. New York: Penguin.